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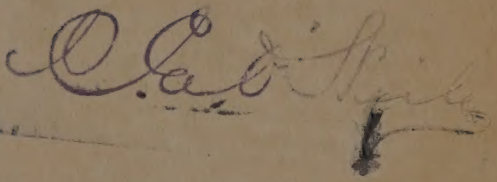

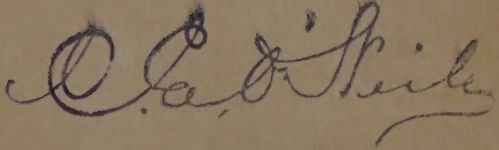

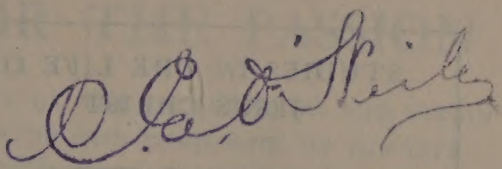

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THE PREPARATION FOR THE PASSION

A STUDY OF THE INCARNATION AND VIRGIN BIRTH OF OUR LORD, AND OF HIS LIFE FROM BETHLEHEM TO CANA OF GALILEE

INCLUDING NOTES ON THE FIRST TWO CHAPTERS OF ST. MATTHEW AND OF ST. LUKE

BY THE

REV. JAMES S. STONE, D.D.

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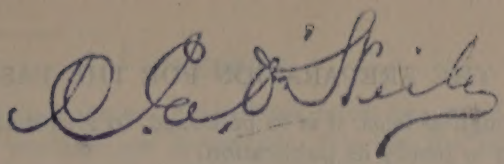

PREFACE

THE subjects set forth in the title-page and in the table of contents lie at the foundation of all studies of the life and passion of our Blessed Lord. They are of profound and lasting interest to all Christian people. Without some knowledge of these doctrines and facts, there can be little appreciation of that life and passion, the hope and salvation of the world. The purpose of this book is to further such knowledge, to present some of the cardinal principles and fundamental facts of Christianity, and to shew that in the new light, and under conditions unfamiliar to former generations, the ancient truths have lost none of their grace or vitality.

A complete and comprehensive study of subjects so important, complex, and far-reaching as these could not be contained in a volume of this size; and yet for readers who have neither time nor strength to grapple with the enormous literature which the centuries have accumulated on these themes the impossibility may be an advantage. If the whole field has not been covered, certain salient points have been reached, the chief outlines have been sketched, and not a few openings to further enquiry indicated. It will also be found that the book has a definite method and purpose of its own,—

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enough at least, it is to be hoped, to give it character and to justify its publication.

The wisdom or need of studies of this kind is scarcely open to dispute. Christianity without either facts to support it or doctrines to express it would be helpless. It is said that in the years to come there will be greater devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, and much less consideration of theology. But it is difficult to see how there can be devotion without some decisions or inferences being reached as to the nature and position of the Person to whom the devotion is to be given. If we love and worship Christ, sooner or later we are forced to examine, not only the evidences which support His claims to our affection and homage, but also the philosophy which lies behind such claims. We cannot give ourselves to one in whom we do not believe ; and we cannot believe unless we have some reason for our faith. The supposition, therefore, that theology has outserved its usefulness, that it will have less and less influence in the future, though more frequently entertained than in years gone by, can hardly be justified. Man will never give up the study of God, and of the things which pertain immediately to God. The writings of the New Testament, as the primary authority for historical Christianity, will lose none of their power ; and conclusions which have been reached by research, study, and reflection, and tested by prolonged and varied experience, will remain the basis of devotion and service.

This does not mean that interpretations of doctrines and presentations of facts should never alter. They must needs change with the age, and to some extent

with the individual. Transitions from one point of view to another are inevitable. We see the same truth our fathers saw, but we cannot see it exactly as they saw it. Failure to recognize this fact has led to much misunderstanding, and in not a few instances to the repudiation of fundamental truths: all of which has been pointed out again and again,—and after these many years seems still to need reiteration. But the influence of so-called modern thought, which has destroyed, or at least endangered, some opinions and deductions which were formerly popular, perhaps helpful, is not necessarily hostile to the faith of the Church as declared in the Nicene and Athanasian symbols. The Incarnation and the Virgin-birth are eternal verities, and such verities are not affected by changes and differences of elucidation. Nor do Buddhist legends or Rabbinical fables really tell against them, or against any of the truths which cluster round them. The day has gone by since Christianity had aught to fear either from the study of comparative religions or from the discoveries of ethnologists or folklorists. Notwithstanding the attacks which have been made on Christianity, and that in every generation since the days of the Apostles, Christianity still lives and increases in strength.

Without this confidence in the imperishable nature of the faith once delivered to the saints, and in the sure triumph of the Church of God, the study of the subjects presented in this volume would be of little use.

Moreover, should it be thought, that in dealing, for instance, with the fact of the Virgin-birth, the

writer, to maintain what he believes to be the best way to account for the greater number of difficulties involved in the interpretations heretofore advanced, has disparaged unduly the Blessed Virgin herself,—principally in taking it for granted that she neither realized the truth of the Incarnation, nor appreciated the Virgin-birth itself, that she was not a keen witted or readily discerning woman,—let it be understood clearly and without qualification, that he is second to none in humble and loving recognition of the qualities and graces of her who was blessed above all women. Simply because she was the means of the Incarnation, and therefore the mother of Him whom the Church worships as God, he exalts and reverences her as much as they do who have propounded dogmas, apparently extravagant, concerning her.

Further, throughout this book it is admitted that mystery borders the truths and facts with which it deals. There are regions into which the mind cannot penetrate. It is folly to suppose that human reason can discover, much less explain, all the deep things of God. He who turns aside from the attempt, far from being cowardly, may be wise in the recognition of his own inability, and of the fruitlessness of the task. And when one realizes that the finite cannot grasp the infinite, it is better to admit the fact than to deny that the infinite exists.

To the Christian reader the subjects brought forward in this book are the most wonderful and fascinating that can engage his attention. The story of Bethlehem, to say nothing of the doctrines it involves, the consequences it created, or the events

it occasioned, can never fail to awaken the imagination and to charm all who hear it. Even the cross is forgotten, and in the Child of joy no one recognizes the Man of sorrows. Whatever the eventide of the passion may have been, the morning that followed the nativity of our Lord revealed naught but joy and hope. The path of our Saviour Christ which leads from His first Christmas to the Church's first Easter may be indeed overshadowed with clouds, but it begins amid the sound of chiming bells and ends with shouts of triumph. And they who would go in the way of the Cross, from Nazareth to the gates of heaven, should lift up their hearts in fond remembrance that Christ was born among men, and in joyful anticipation that by the power of the Cross they will be freed from the bondage of sin and the grave.

The writer hopes that the notes on the chapters of the Nativity, which take up more than half the volume, will be found not only to illustrate and to expand the theme maintained in the earlier part of the book, but also to have each in itself an interest of its own, apart from the argument of the study. The notes may further help to brighten that atmosphere in which the nature and character of the Lord Jesus appear to the greatest advantage, and to deepen that impression which will increase devotion to Him and strengthen faith in Him.

St. James's Rectory, Chicago
Michaelmas Day, 1914.

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THE PREPARATION FOR THE PASSION

Confident of the Truth, freedom of treatment the best course.

In studies such as this which now lies before us, and others which are connected with the same subject, it is not easy to forecast the path by which we may be led. We are entering as it were into a region of thought, enquiry, and suggestion, which, though it may be compared to a wilderness or woodland, has yet many well-trodden paths running hither and thither; and at the outset we know not whether we shall continue in this road, or turn aside into some other way, or make out a new course for ourselves. We desire to be uncontrolled by any plan other than the purpose to set forth and illustrate the general theme. If there be digression, we trust that the digression will be found consistent with the subject, helpful to a better understanding thereof, and converging easily again into the main thesis.

The object of this Study.

Our intention is to direct attention to the processes of that preparation by which our Blessed Lord was made ready for the Sacrifice at Calvary, which we regard as the culminating and supreme

purpose for which He came into the world. With reverence and devotion we would think of Him in His Deity, His Incarnation, His Virgin-Birth, and the early days of His life on earth: thus contemplating the glory, love, and power which were displayed in Him so abundantly and graciously; and then, so far as we are able, examine the characteristics, incidents, and circumstances which have made Him so necessary to the lives and so dear to the hearts of His people.

Mystery inevitable, and to be acknowledged.

In any study of the life of our Divine Redeemer, there comes the consciousness that we are on the edge of mystery. Behind the pleasant shores of the sea and the happy gardens and fields of the village-home,—scenes in which Nature displays a charm we can appreciate, and to some extent understand,—there lie vast ranges of mountains, the domes and peaks of which are inaccessible, and the recesses and depths impenetrable. And the mountains so stand as to be necessary to the picture at their feet. Without those towering heights and endless masses of precipitous rocks, now dark and forbidding as a storm-swept Sinai, and now radiant and beautiful as the hills of God, there would be nothing extraordinary or wonderful in the lowlands. The background, sublime and unknown, creates the interest. So the mystery which borders the life of the Son of man. But for the mystery that life would be no more than other lives. You may determine to keep the mind on the human elements in that life, to

think of Him only as the Child of earth and the Teacher of Nazareth, and to behold in Him only such qualities as may be understood; but you cannot thus escape the mystery. It remains there all the time: perhaps to bewilder, perhaps to subdue, perhaps to occasion unbelief and denunciation, but always to fascinate.

Christ, though man, differs from all other men.

For, from the day when the disciples realized that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ, and through all the generations, they who have thought of Him at all seriously have discovered and acknowledged that in some profound and essential quality He was not as other men are. There was something about Him and in Him which differentiated Him from all other men. The difference did not appear simply in His moral perfection or in His intellectual pre-eminence, unique though these were; but in His personality and character. Much of Him could be understood; but much more of Him baffled investigation. The mystery made itself evident.

It is foolish to attempt to explain the unexplainable.

Recognizing this mystery, we set out on our study. There are both facts and deductions that we are not able to understand, and shall not pretend to understand. Nor shall we endeavour to persuade ourselves that what we cannot understand does not exist. The supernatural and the divine can be ruled out of the life of Christ, only by a desperate determination to refuse all evidence that does not show the power of the human mind over all things whatsoever. We have no more belief in such comprehension or infallibility than we have in the

wisdom of ignoring or denying a fact simply because it is beyond our experience.

Affection greater than knowledge.

In all its forms, and no less in its Christian development, religion is more concerned with the emotions than with the intellect. Not that the mind is set aside: for it has functions to exercise, and duties to discharge, without which religion would fail to fulfil its purpose, and probably would lapse into deplorable superstition. But enthusiasm, devotion, charity, and readiness to sacrifice, springing out of a heart possessed and animated by the spirit of religion, while unable to do without reason, are superior to reason, and control, purify, and brighten life to an extent and with a force that are unknown to reason. Religion operates in the individual as an intuition, an impulse. The man under its influence, figuratively speaking, is carried body, soul, and spirit out into the very ocean of mystery, not understanding either the mystery itself or the power which possesses him, perhaps not even wishing to understand them, but satisfied both in the knowledge that he is near God, and in the consciousness that peace and joy have come into his life. He is not so much interested in causes and processes as in results. He does not know God, but he knows that God is with him, and is making out of him that which without God he can never be. Thus the act of devotion is not one of questioning or doubting, but of absorption, ecstasy, sacrifice. The mystery does not perplex. Possibly it appeals to some elements of our nature, and increases our assur-

ance of contact with the infinite and eternal. And thus, too, the Christian when worshipping, or contemplating, or even studying his Lord and Saviour, is not intimidated by the weakness of his comprehension. He may not think of such. He is satisfied that Christ is God,—that He cannot be other than God,—and that the attributes of Deity necessarily belong to Him since His nativity, as they have eternally belonged to Him.

Yet love does not exclude enquiry.

But though there be mystery, so that, for instance, we cannot explain the Incarnation, or the union of the two natures and the two wills in the one Person, yet this does not imply that we may not discover some facts in that mystery, and even examine and set those facts in relation to each other and to the mystery itself. The finite may not fathom the infinite, or the temporal explore the eternal, not because they are exclusive of each other and divided from each other by an impassable gulf, but because of the restriction of power. So far as the power can go, it may enter the infinite and the eternal. No hand can contain the Atlantic, and yet it may hold some part of its waters, and from that part learn something of the whole, even as the mind can pass beyond the horizon which bounds the physical vision. Nor, in those elements and phases of religion where the intellect has more opportunity than in the devotional, can enquiry be avoided. The unknown enthralls the investigator. The mystery may be impenetrable, yet the mind would venture as far as possible ; only, when it reaches the point beyond which it cannot go, wisdom

urges it both to acknowledge the existence of the mystery and its own inability, and also to wait patiently and hopefully for God to reveal that which cannot otherwise be discovered.

Some truths are intuitive, and neither time nor effort need be given to their investigation.

Necessarily in things religious, as well as in things secular, some conclusions or positions have to be taken for granted. One cannot stop to support theses such as individuality, the future life, the doctrine of rewards and punishments, the fact of conscience, or the existence of God. He who would deny these primary and fundamental principles cannot enter into a study of the development of a religion such as Christianity. The Christian scriptures, indeed, the phenomena of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the fact and history of the Church, the need and process of redemption, grace and the means of grace, and the relationship of God and man, of the sinner and the Saviour, would be meaningless. As distinguished from Revealed Religion, what is commonly called Natural Religion, whence may be learned such truths as those which we assume to be admitted, must, to some extent at least, precede any reading of the New Testament or examination of its doctrines. Thus, for instance, unless in the first place by Natural Religion we are convinced of the existence of God, we cannot appreciate the teachings of Revealed Religion concerning His nature,—His attributes, the Unity of Substance and the Trinity of Persons.

"Canst thou by searching find out God?"

The apprehension of God may have been in the beginning by intuition, suggestion, or reflec-

tion. Perhaps these possible means may have united in the formation of the idea. The tendency or disposition was there. Some had it in greater measure, and expressing it they added force to the tendency in others, who, with strengthened inclination, in turn led the way to further realization ; and many, concluding that effects come from causes, felt that as the world could not create itself, it must have had a Creator. At all events, in some way or other, whether springing up naturally in the human mind or borne in upon it irresistibly from without, the thought of a Supreme Being obtained recognition and was developed. Man could not, indeed, know God, but he came to feel certain there was a God. What He was or where He was could be ascertained only in part ; and that after much consideration and experience. But it is doubtful if any man in whom the tendency did not exist would have been influenced either by persuasion or by example. No one can be argued into a belief in God. Faith may be helped by argument, but it cannot be thereby created.

Arguments do not of themselves convince.

Hence the failure of the many efforts to prove for the benefit of the unbeliever the existence of the Deity. To the believer they may appear conclusive and irrefutable ; but they are little or rather no help to the man to whom God is not self-evident. He may assent to the correctness of the reasoning, and may admit the cogency of the logic, but he remains unconvinced. He may, to some extent, even have the will or desire to accept the conclusions ; and yet, without that

faculty, which we may call instinct or perception, a barrier lies in his way. He can no more get beyond that barrier than the man without poetry in his soul can understand Nature.

Naturally and commonly man believes there is a God.

On the other hand, it may be questioned whether to any considerable extent such is ever the condition of the normal man ; and whether, instead of seeking for evidences of the fact of God, some men may not be casting about for arguments to prove that there is no God. Why one should wish to reach the latter conclusion is difficult for those to understand who do not desire it ; but the virulence with which so-called unbelievers sometimes denounce a theory which they cannot possibly disprove, suggests that they are endeavouring to destroy in themselves a faith running counter to their wishes or opinions. It does not follow, because a man declares there is no God, that in his heart of hearts he so believes. He thinks he does, and thereby is perfectly honest, but so long as he considers it necessary to reiterate and defend his opinion, he is still afraid of that which he affirms does not exist. Hence it may be doubted if the supposition that God is not has ever prevailed to any extent among men.

Science in this enquiry soon reaches its limit, and becomes helpless.

It is sometimes said that science has disproved both the ancient and the modern conceptions of God, but this is said only where the nature and function of science are misunderstood. Science, indeed, by its enormous accumulations of facts and its magnificent researches and discoveries, may have so overwhelmed the mind, and ab-

sorbed the attention, that the question of first causes has been in part, perhaps largely, forgotten ; but science, as such, has nothing to do with forces which are not material, or rather which lie behind matter. It can judge of the phenomena of life, and it may venture towards a theory of the origin of life, but the moment that physical facts fail, it can go no farther. Of itself it can say nothing of the Originator of life, though logically it may be forced to admit there is such an Originator. But neither the admission nor the denial proves anything. Science is precluded from entering into the discussion. Its attitude in respect to spiritual life and theory cannot be other than agnostic : it simply does not know, and from its scope and purpose it cannot know. Nor would any true scientist, even though he should dislike any and every conception of God, and go so far as to question the fact of God, claim to have disproved that which so far as science is concerned is neither provable nor disprovable.

From a conviction of the existence of God, man proceeds to formulate his ideas of God.

As a matter of fact, whenever man has awakened to the truth of God, so as to become deeply interested in God, he has sought to find out something about God. It has been so in all ages, and the search is no less anxious, indeed no less imperative, in the individual to-day who grasps the fact and suspects its consequences. He will seek to discover God. Nor is it improbable that God should help him in his desire either by revelation or by impulse, perhaps by both. The revelation may have been direct or

indirect; the impulse created within himself or derived from contact with others. Both may have been acquired instantaneously or by the slow process of evolution: so far as mankind at large is concerned, history indicates that the latter has been commonly the way. Man has been led on, or has wandered on, step by step, from one conception to another, as is shown in the development of Jewish theology, and also of Christian, until he has reached that knowledge of God, the highest so far attained, set forth in the teaching, and still more clearly in the life, of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament gives the highest of all conceptions of God.

For no matter how or whence came the conception of God which Christianity presents, the world has never known anything that has answered more fully and satisfyingly to the heart and mind of man. It is not complete: from the very nature of things it could not be complete. Men cannot know the whole of God, any more than the finite can take in the infinite or time embrace eternity. But the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures bring Him nearer to man than any other sources of knowledge that have been discovered by man, nearer than Nature itself, notwithstanding its manifold evidences of a wise, mighty, and beneficent Creator.

The tendency towards Truth necessary to make argument real.

And here again, somehow or other, if these Scriptures do not of themselves occasion responsiveness,—if the reader does not *feel* that they answer to his cry for help,—no argument can give them authority. Like the so-called evidences of Christianity, the testimony to their

worth from history, philosophy, or experience may help the reader who accepts them, but no such testimony will overcome the tendency to reject them. There must be towards religion and things religious an inclination or impulse, coming whence it matters not, before the mind can work for them. In other words, the will or desire must precede the intellectual act: as some would say, before all effort comes prevenient grace.

Nature teaches those only who have the intuition that God exists.

That from Nature much may be learned of God is true; but how much depends upon what we mean by Nature—whether the physical world outside of man, or the mind or intellectual and emotional powers which are in man. In neither case does Nature unaided help greatly to the solution of the problems engendered by the serious thought of God. If a Creator be admitted, the evidences of many of His attributes are afforded both in the heavens above and in the flowers which lie at our feet. We may discern His wisdom, His delight in the beauty of form and colour, His care and foresight for the least as well as for the greatest of His creatures, His knowledge and skill whereby all things are fitted into an harmonious whole and each is adapted to its purpose, and His protecting love over all His work. In the storm we may fancy alike His anger as shown in destruction, and His mercy in making that destruction the means whereby evil may be driven away and good extended. But it may be doubted if Nature herself really teaches any of this. We

may be reading into Nature ideas which have been generated and developed in our own mind; or, to put it another way, we have made Nature support our own conceptions and theories. Thus, indeed, we may be said to learn much of God: only, rather than Nature being our teacher, Nature has been an echo of our own voice, a reflection of our own mind, and somehow or other in that echo and reflection we have found both joy and encouragement. Had we no eyes to see or no ears to hear, there would be for us no traces of the Deity in the world around.

God is not in Nature, but in Man.

And this is the conclusion reached by most seekers after God. As others besides St. Augustine have told us, it is not in things outside of man that God may be found, but rather in man himself. The only thing in creation made in the image or likeness of God is man; and the image or likeness can only be in the spiritual and mental part of man. The Lord was not in the wind, or in the earthquake, or in the fire, but in the still small voice; and to Elijah, as centuries later to the Maid of Domrémy, whether from without or from within we are not curious to enquire, the voice came as the expression of the Divine. It is probable that few people who realize the presence of God seek to define the faculty by which that realization is made: the fact to them is so vital and absorbing that they care little for causes or means. But this is certain: they do not apprehend God by the things of Nature external to

themselves, notwithstanding their beauty and wonder, but by thoughts, ideas, fancies, convictions which arise in their own heart and mind. They learn to love Nature, because it is God's workmanship, but the evolution or revelation of Divine things appears not in Nature.

God is in man, not as a faculty, but as an energy.

When, however, we speak of God as manifesting Himself within the mind and heart of man, rather than in external Nature, we must avoid regarding God and the human soul as identical, or thinking of reason as other than a faculty within man, distinct and separate from God. Our intention is not to imply that we are part of Deity, in any sense enabling us to make our feelings infallible or the source of knowledge; but that, consciously or unconsciously, our feelings are begotten of the search we have made by our intellectual faculties to find out God. In other words, the means to that end are within ourselves, and not in the things outside ourselves —that in human experience and reflection we may approach God, rather than through the phenomena of external creation. But God Himself is not in us personally, though by His grace He may be operating in us potentially. Unless we clearly realize this, we shall encounter the danger of making religion dependent upon our own imagination and reflection, and of resting the existence of God upon our own supposition. This danger has confronted the Church more than once in its history, *e.g.* in Neoplatonism, Montanism, and the several forms of mediæval and modern mysticism. It is the leading prin-

ciple, *e.g.*, of Brahmanism and Buddhism; but, if accepted, it would be fatal to Christianity.

The term "God" is not a metaphor, but descriptive of a reality.

Nor may the term "God" be taken as a figure or personification of the forces which create and develop life, and control all things visible or invisible, spiritual or material. The Deity is indeed a "force," but force or energy, no matter what its form, is not Deity. One cannot ascribe to it consciousness or volition. Moreover, one cannot, without violence to one's own judgement or discernment, regard either creation or evolution as other than the results of intelligent and omnipotent design. There are no evidences that things simply happen or chance to be what they are. The mere mechanism of the universe excludes such a conclusion from serious consideration. We may not recognize the law-maker, but we can hardly suppose the law to have made itself, though we may admit that one object may so act upon another object as to make only one result possible. But even then such result will be found to be in accordance with some law which applies to all like conditions.

God is inconceivable other than as a personality.

It is difficult, therefore, and probably for the greater number of men impossible, to think of God as other than a Person, having individuality, determination, and possessing all the qualities which belong to personality. Without this premise it would be useless to attempt to consider the questions involved in the study now before us. Were there no personal God, there could not have been an Incarnation, and the Deity of Christ would be not only meaningless, but impossible.

In a consideration of the life and character of the Lord Jesus, especially when we would review the preparation to which He submitted Himself for His Passion, some thought must be given to His Deity and Incarnation. We cannot turn aside from the mystery. As man He was as all men are, but if it be true, as we believe it to be, that His personality lay not in His humanity, then in a most important particular He differed from all men. Thus, in words that can scarcely be too familiar, the Confession or Symbol commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius sets forth that Christology which, gathered from Sacred Scripture and taught by the Church through the ages, is held to be both orthodox and catholic. We do not quote this Creed because it has, or ever has had, ecumenical authority, venerable though it be, but because it sets forth the universally accepted truth of Christ more clearly than any other document ancient or modern. That truth is maintained, not on the authority of the Creed, but for its own merits.

If Christ be God, then of necessity His personality is in His divine nature.

The articles upon the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ are these:

"And the Catholic Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance."

"The right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;

God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of His Mother, born in the world;

Perfect God, and perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting;

Equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching His Manhood.
Who although He be God and Man: yet He is not two, but one Christ;
One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God;
One altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person.
For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is One Christ."

The Apostles may be assumed to have had authority for their teaching.

In supporting from the New Testament these conclusions, we do not in the first place seek to discover the grounds the sacred writers had for their faith, but rather to ascertain clearly their inferences and determinations. It may be assumed that they held themselves justified in their conception and exposition of Christ. Undoubtedly reason and faith wrought together, but stronger and more important than either were experience and intuition. The Apostles and Evangelists probably felt more than they thought, and by their actual, living acquaintance with the facts they presented were convinced of their truth. It is not possible for us to know how these men were led to their decisions; though as we examine the decisions some glimpses of the process may appear. At all events, the evidence of the writers of the Epistles and Gospels was experimental rather than theoretical.

Personal experience of first importance.

Some of these writers had known the Lord Jesus in the flesh, immediately and intimately.

Others had received their knowledge of Him from those who had so known Him. In every instance He was to them a near and familiar reality. They were well acquainted with His words and deeds. They had realized the grace of His sacrifice, and the power of His resurrection; and by His teaching and virtue they possessed a life nobler and happier than had been possible without Him. They loved Him with a love that could withstand death. What manner of man, then, did they imagine Him to be?

The Epistles in the New Testament the oldest evidence on hand.

This we can gather only from their written utterances, and the earliest of these are contained in the Epistles. Even were the Gospel according to St. Mark published by A.D. 70, it is doubtful if its circulation was general for some years later; and the other Synoptics may not have been commonly known before A.D. 80 or 85. Probably two, if not three, generations passed before the Church at large possessed any of the Gospels as we now have them. Much of the material contained in these Gospels may have been written and spread abroad earlier; but that which has not been preserved in the present Gospels has been lost. Were it not for the Epistles we should not know what the generations present and immediately preceding thought of Him whose life is set forth by the several Evangelists. These Epistles themselves are incidental,—drawn from their writers by some chance condition or contingency. They were not set treatises, designed and finished, to make known to the

Church in general the scheme or reason of the Christian religion. That religion was already known and accepted by the people to whom these Epistles are addressed ; and therefore the Epistles touch only upon such doctrines or practices as were drawn out by the occasion. Especially is this true of the thirteen Epistles written by St. Paul : all of which necessarily left his hand before his martyrdom, about A.D. 65. As they were addressed to particular churches or individuals, some time must have elapsed before copies of them were made and distributed throughout the entire Christian community. Probably, as with the Gospels, many years went by, the century itself may have closed, before the Epistles were universally known.

The value and unity of the New Testament.

Under the circumstances, it is surprising that so much of the teaching of the Apostles and Evangelists was preserved. No document contains the whole of that teaching, not even all of them put together, and yet from these fragments, incidental and undesigned as they are, we may gain a conception of that whole. The fragments, indeed, piece together with wonderful harmony ; and, were we to set aside the Gospels, we could still from the Epistles construct the entire system of Christianity.

The Epistles and Gospels are the outcome of facts which united constitute Christianity.

It is well to keep this in mind, for some have supposed that the teaching in the Epistles is a development of the teaching in the Gospels. Christianity arises from neither the Epistles nor the Gospels. They rather spring out of it, and instead of originating its doctrines and practices

do no more than register the existence of those doctrines and practices. The time came when the Church accepted the Epistles and Gospels as evidences and witnesses of the truths in which she believed; but she has never held them to be the sources of Christianity. As evidences and witnesses the Epistles come first in time. With the exception of the Evangelists themselves and the author of the Apocalypse, no writer in the New Testament ever saw any one of the Gospels. When, therefore, we turn to the Epistles to learn what the writers of them thought of Christ, we may not suppose that they made their deductions from books which at the time were not in existence. Their knowledge of Him was more immediate, and their conclusions were more direct.

The Epistles and Gospels in absolute accord, and not designed to be explanatory of each other.

It is sometimes alleged that between the Epistles and the Gospels there exists a difference both in the conception and also in the treatment of Christ, and it is assumed that the Epistles present a theory of His nature and mission other than that conveyed by the Gospels. To some critics this difference appears so wide that they speak of the Christ of the Epistles and the Jesus of the Gospels, if not as two distinct persons, yet as evolutions of two distinct theories. If this were so, the theory in the Epistles can scarcely be a development of that given in the Gospels; nor may the latter be thought of as a return to a norm from which the former had departed. It may chance, indeed, that both Epistles and Gospels developed from a common

norm, but their variation from each other has been on lines of independent development, and not from any influence of the one on the other. The Epistles and the Fourth Gospel were written under influences and amid surroundings other than those which affected the writers of the Synoptics ; but the difference of conception and treatment may be exaggerated, and, if real, will be found to be more one of method of expression than of essential character.

The value of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Epistle to the Hebrews contains one of the most explicit declarations of the faith of primitive Christianity concerning the nature of Jesus of Nazareth. The Epistles of St. Paul are earlier in date ; but, even were they known to the author, no trace of their influence appears in his work. From a literary point of view, of all the books of the New Testament it is the most finished. Its arguments are clear and orderly ; its style is rhetorical, self-possessed, calm, dignified ; its purpose plain and unswerving. The author differs from St. Paul in his attitude towards Judaism. To the latter the old system was useful as awakening conscience, thereby showing the need of the Gospel ; to the former, the law was no more than a shadow of the good things to come. On the one side, Judaism was a preparation for Christianity ; on the other, Christianity presented a new covenant, which may have been prefigured by the old covenant, but was not contained in it.

The authorship is unknown. The oldest

manuscripts give the title simply, "To the Hebrews." About the middle of the second century, a tradition sprang up in the East ascribing it to St. Paul, but the West did not so accept it till the fifth century, and even then St. Jerome expressed hesitation. That learned and judicious scholar declared that it was no matter who wrote it, since it is the work of an orthodox member of the Church, and is commended by public reading in the churches. Both Luther and Calvin rejected the Pauline authorship, and this conclusion is now generally maintained. In the course of time, the Epistle has been attributed to St. Luke, to Clement of Rome, to Apollos, and to St. Barnabas; and in favour of St. Barnabas, the Rev. George Edmundson, in the Bampton Lectures for 1913, on *The Church in Rome in the First Century*, has produced arguments that may not be lightly set aside. Professor Harnack has suggested, and Rendel Harris has supported, the possibility that the Epistle was written by Priscilla or Prisca, favourably known in the early Church as an accomplished woman-evangelist, and with her husband, Aquila, a tried friend of St. Paul. The Apostle in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (xvi. 19), speaks of "the Church that is in their house." But this conjecture is more interesting and plausible than conclusive. The authorship remains still a subject of speculation.

The authorship of the Epistle is undiscoverable.

Epistle to Dardanus, 129

In the Marriage Office given in the Book of Common Prayer, a quotation from the Epistle implies that the Epistle was written by St. Paul.

The date of the Epistle may be approximated. From the use of the present tense in speaking of the Temple services, and more particularly

The date not so uncertain.

from the unlikelihood that otherwise such a comparison would have been made between Christ's sacrifice and the Jewish sacrifices, as is made in chapter x., it is generally agreed that the Epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. This argument, however, is open to dispute on the ground that rabbinical writers as well as Josephus make a similar use of the present tense. And yet it is not easy to suppose that had the Temple been destroyed, no allusion would have been made to it. If, as some scholars think, the Epistle was addressed to the Church in Rome, which probably consisted largely of Jewish converts,—who may have been troubled on the questions of the ancient priesthood and rites,—the date may be still earlier. Could we be certain that xiii. 7 refers to the recent loss of rulers or guides, who, to the end of their life or course, had been consistent to Christian truth, the year could be pressed still farther back, to the Neronian persecution, say, about 65. That a severe trial had lately occurred seems implied by x. 33; and xii. 4 is certainly addressed to those who had not been called upon to resist unto blood. If the right reading in x. 34 be δεσμίοις, rather than δεσμοῖς μου, so that the verse should read, "Ye had compassion on them that were in bonds," instead of "on me in my bonds," we have a suggestion, not only, by the way, that St. Paul was not the writer of the Epistle, but also that many had suffered: a suggestion further strengthened by xiii. 3. At the same time, the writer implies that the worst had not yet

happened: x. 25; xii. 4 *sqq.*; xiii. 13, 14. This may refer to the beginning of the struggle in Judea, about A.D. 66, which culminated in the fall of Jerusalem; or to a second outbreak of the persecution by Nero. Were there two persecutions under this emperor, the first probably preceded the burning of Rome; and the Epistle may have been written before A.D. 63. On the other hand, it could not have been written much earlier, for ii. 3 indicates that the first generation of Christians had passed away.

Its destination uncertain.

Scholars are divided as to the destination of the Epistle. While Rome seems the most likely place, there is something to be said in favour of Jerusalem, and even of Alexandria; but the question now can never be decided. Nor yet the place where it was written. The words in xiii. 24, "They of Italy salute you," may describe Italian Christians either in their own country or in a foreign land. The postscript is of no authority. That an Alexandrian tone has been discovered in the Epistle, as we shall see later, is not sufficient evidence that the writing was from Alexandria.

Its testimony to the faith of the Church concerning the nature of Christ invaluable and conclusive.

Questions, however, concerning the authorship, the exact date, the place of writing, and the community addressed, are of small moment beside the purpose for which we make reference to this Epistle. A writer, unknown, but possessing an advanced spiritual experience, a strong grasp of Christian doctrine and purpose, and a thorough knowledge of the Jewish scriptures and customs, gives in it a representation of the

nature of Christ which is not excelled by any other writer in the New Testament. Here we learn clearly and definitely what the Christians of the seventh or eighth decade of the first century thought of their Lord and Saviour. Possibly the writer had seen some of the Pauline Epistles, say, as some writers have supposed, the Epistle to the Romans. If the thirteenth chapter were part of the original document, he was certainly acquainted with Timothy, St. Paul's beloved disciple; and he may have gained from him some knowledge of his master's theology. As a leader, doubtless he met others who had been taught by the first Apostles. Tradition may have given him the substance of the Gospels, though as we know them they had not then been written. At any rate, he here expresses, not only his own belief, but also that held in common by all Christian believers; and to which he would especially direct the attention of this particular community of Hebrew converts.

The credal character of the prologue.

The introduction contains a magnificent proclamation of the Deity of the Son of God. The opening paragraph of the first chapter, after presenting a contrast between the old and the new revelations, and before dealing with the theme in which is maintained the superiority of the Son over the angels, sets forth the nature of the Son, and His work as prophet, priest, and king. In the Revised Version the passage is thus given:

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in

divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they."

The oneness of the two dispensations.

God is here declared to be the author of both dispensations: the old, in which by means of the prophets, at many times and in various ways, He unfolded His will unto the fathers; and the new, in which once and for all He made Himself known in the Son. Both the Jewish and the Christian revelations are of divine origin: but the one was progressive and prolonged, and inferior in its means; and the other, immediate and perfect. Coming, however, from the one Source, and having as their one purpose the enlightenment of the world, they differ not in kind, but in degree. The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for while in the New we behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the dawnings and shadowings of that knowledge and glory are evident in the Old Testament. Our Blessed Lord Himself is expressly said, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, to have expounded unto the disciples in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. If in the Incarnation He reveals the will of God immediately to the Church, so in His

2 Cor. iv. 6.

Luke xxiv. 27.

Divine Person in old time He revealed that same will by the prophets. The two processes are represented by the figures of Sinai and Sion: in the one, majesty and splendour,—the mount that burned with fire, blackness and darkness and tempest,—so that they who heard were smitten by fear, and intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more; in the other, the grace and gentleness of a loving personality, the contact of heart with heart, the sympathy that wins, the example that helps, the sacrifice that saves. Elijah is the type of the early age, Christ the fulfilment of the ages; and, dreading no more the fires of God descending from heaven, men realize that God has taken to Himself humanity, that He may purify and cherish it, and that it may grow into Him.

Heb. xii. 18, 19.

Christ the Son of God in a unique sense.

It should be observed that in the original the pronoun is omitted before the word "Son," in the second verse: "hath spoken unto us in a Son"; and it is sometimes suggested that this is intentional, in order to show that Christ, while the Firstborn and the Captain of their salvation, is one of many sons. In becoming man He did indeed make Himself a brother to every man, so that both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one father: "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren"; but this fact does not seem to have an application here. A like omission of the article appears in vii. 28: "the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore"; and in iii. 6, and v. 8, Christ is

Heb. ii. 10, 11.

spoken of as "a Son": *i.e.* to avoid any possible ambiguity, "One who is Son." It is not sufficient to say that in these instances "Son" is taken as a proper name; and yet to speak of Christ as "Son of God" does more emphatically and definitely express the exclusive character of His Sonship than even the term "The Son of God." It lays emphasis more on His nature than on His personality. And that Christ is not to be taken in this place as other than "his Son," even though the pronoun is omitted, is shown farther on in this chapter by these facts: that God is represented as speaking of Him as "my Son," He is expressly called "the Son," and honours are ascribed to Him such as are not possessed even by the angels, the highest order of all created beings. Moreover, while glory came to Him in consequence of the Incarnation, much that is here said of Him could be said only of One who existed before the worlds were made or man was created.

See Alford's *Gk. Test.*, iv. p. 4; also Westcott on Hebrews, p. 34.

The Son is described by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews as the effulgence, the splendid radiance, the brightness, the brilliant shining forth, of the glory of God: that is to say, the manifestation, and the only manifestation, of the attributes, the essential majesty, of God. He is the very image or expression of the Divine substance or being,—as exact as is the figure left by a seal upon that which is fitted to receive it, or as the likeness in a true and clear mirror of the object presented to it. So Wisdom is described as "an effulgence from

Christ the complete expression of God.

Wis. vii. 26.

everlasting light, an unspotted mirror of the power of God, and an image of his goodness." No words could more certainly set forth the oneness of the Father and the Son, the Light out of Light, (φῶς ἐκ φωτός), the numerical identity of the essence of God and the essence of Christ. And yet the words as certainly indicate a difference, such as must necessarily exist between that which is manifested and the manifestation itself.

The Father and the Son of the same numerical substance.

This is more clearly marked in the second of the two figures: in the *image*, rather than in the *effulgence*. In the latter, Christ is the expression of God, the One in whom we may see and know God, coessential (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father; but in the former, while the connexion is evident, a distinction is implied between the effect and the cause of the effect. This distinction appears in the terms "Father" and "Son," which when applied to God are used as metaphors to describe these conditions of unity of substance and diversity of person. The word "Person" is used theologically, without much regard for its derivation or its exact meaning, to denote the particular manner or mode of the being or essence of God, in the Father and in the Son, in the image and in that which is the source or cause of the image. The difference is clear, as are also the results of the difference; and the term "person" was adopted to stand for, but not to explain, those results. Thus we speak of the person of the Father and the person of the Son, to enable us to differentiate certain peculiar

The word applies equally to the Holy Ghost. God has been pleased to reveal to us His being in three distinct modes.

features in the substance which belongs to both, and which makes both one.

The existence of Christ a proof of the existence of God.

The image, too, is dependent on that which it represents. There can be no expression or manifestation of that which does not exist; and the Son could not be the very image of the Father were there no Father. Thus, as the cause occasions the effect, and without which the effect could not come into being, and as the light produces the radiance, so the Father is said to beget the Son, and the Son is called the Only-begotten (*μονογενής*) of the Father. The Son is of the Father in a sense that nothing else is of the Father; hence the figure "Begotten." He is not made, as the worlds were made, of the wisdom and power of God, but is generated of His very nature: God out of God, very God out of very God. On the other hand, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to conceive any thing or any person existing of which there is no manifestation or expression. Even an inanimate object must have some properties or qualities which make known its nature. A tree, for instance, has form, dimensions, and colour, without which it would not be known to be a tree,—without which, indeed, it could not be supposed to have any being. So, in a much more important sense, God must be known, not by attributes which He may possess, but by some indubitable and adequate display of Himself. The Son is begotten by the Father of necessity. Without the Son there would be no Father; and so far as we can see, there could be no

Father. The Father and the Son, then, in person distinct, are in substance eternally and necessarily one.

Christ as man is not the expression of God.

This fact contravenes the supposition sometimes advanced, that it was by the Incarnation that Christ became the Expression of God. By the Incarnation He became man, and as man He revealed and taught much concerning God, but as man He could not be the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His person or substance. For by God man was made, and not begotten. God created him, and he is a manifestation of the power of God, but not a manifestation of God. Man as such is not, and cannot be, the Son of God in the sense that Christ is the Son of God. The sonship of Christ involves His pre-existence. Through Him, says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, He made the worlds or the ages, and the writer goes on to declare that this same Son preserves and keeps that which had been created by and through Him: "upholding all things by the word of his power." The phrase implies that this bearing and guiding of all things is done, not by the exercise of His power, but by the Word: "He spake and it was done: He commanded and it stood fast." The pre-existence of the Son is further referred to by this writer in vii. 3; and xiv. 9.

The honour the Father gives the Son is not the essential glory of Deity, but

The phrase in the second verse, "Whom he hath appointed heir of all things," indicates that the Father has bestowed upon the Son, not the dominion or lordship which He had naturally

as God, one indivisibly and eternally with the Father, but the inheritance which was His by right of the work wrought by Him in His human nature, as both God and man in one Person. It is the recognition and exaltation, not of humanity simply as such, but of humanity as it had been taken up into Deity in the person of the Son. The Son condescended to discharge an office in a nature other than that which had for ever been His, and because of this condescension, and in that other nature, He personally is made Lord of all things,—not only of all persons, but also of all things absolutely.

that authority which as man the Son has proved Himself worthy of.

This authority is higher and farther reaching than that which the Psalmist represents the Creator as having conferred upon man in the beginning: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." The things made subject to man are enumerated both in the Psalm and in the first creation-story in Genesis: all the living creatures in the earth. In the course of the ages man has shown himself to have such mastery; but the lordship which Christ has received includes and extends beyond that of which the Psalmist speaks. St. Paul, probably following the first verse of Psalm cx., speaks of much more than birds, beasts, and fishes as being put under Christ's feet,—even death itself; and this interpretation corresponds to that given by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "In that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him." Even should

He has lordship over all things because He has saved them from destruction.

Ps. viii. 6; *cf.* Gen. ii. 26, 28.

1 Cor. xv. 27.

ii. 8.

it be said that in these passages the Lord Jesus is regarded above all men as being the Man,—the One into whom are gathered up all the virtues and powers of humanity,—yet it does not appear that this absolute possession of all things comes to Christ because He is man, but because in His perfect manhood, purposely and really, He saved that which He had been the means of creating, and thereby won for Himself the kingdom.

The oldest record sets forth the highest appreciation of the nature of Christ.

Than these opening words of this Epistle, no passage of Sacred Scripture more definitely reveals the Deity of Jesus Christ; and as one of the earliest passages in the New Testament dealing with the subject, it is not the outcome of interpretation and after-thought. It shows what men thought of this Jesus of Nazareth, in whose sacrifice they found salvation, and to Whom they gave their lives. And that this passage refers to Him, and that the Son therein spoken of is identical with Jesus, is evident from the whole drift of the Epistle. The writer definitely affirms the divine and human natures of our Lord when he calls Him "Jesus, the Son of God."

The influence of Alexandrian philosophy upon the development of Christianity.

Traces, perhaps more than traces, of Alexandrian thought may be discovered in these figures and in this conception of Christ; as also in the Pauline Epistles and in the Gospel according to St. John. This need not, however, be supposed to imply a deflection from original Christianity, though it may afford some explana-

tion of the difference in tone, apparent to some readers, between the Christology of the Epistles and that of the Synoptics. It would have been surprising had there been no such influence, even thus early in the life of the Church. Not only were disciples scattered abroad soon after Pentecost, but foreign philosophies were not unknown in Palestine. Alexandria was one of the most important centres in the world. Larger in area than Rome, and to the last the wealthiest and most prosperous city of the Empire, affording in its excellent harbour and extensive warehouses and markets unrivalled facilities for trade and commerce, and in its colleges and theatres opportunities no less popular for learning and amusement, celebrated far and wide for its merchants, bankers, scholars, physicians, and actors, and with nearly a million inhabitants drawn from every land and of every race, Alexandria gathered to itself the strength and influence of Western Judaism. More than an eighth of the population of Egypt was Jewish ; and in Alexandria the Jew held in his hands not only the chief banking interests, but also the export trade in grain, the profits of which may be imagined when it is remembered that the Egyptian supply of wheat, all of which passed through Alexandria, lasted Rome for four months in the year.

The wealth and learning of the Jews in Alexandria.

An enormous synagogue, the pride of the Jewish community in Egypt and the boast of their countrymen in Palestine, wondrously built and extravagantly decorated, betokened both the influence and position of the Jews in Alexandria,

and also their regard for the religion of their fathers and their anxiety for the promotion of sacred learning. Here gathered many of the most eminent doctors of the law, and here in time grew up a school of Hebrew theologians and philosophers, whose erudition, piety, and wisdom gave them a reputation not second to that of the rabbis of Babylonia, and scarcely inferior to that of the men of Jerusalem. Indeed, Alexandria long before and long after the coming of Christ might well be called the capital of the greater part of the Jewish world.

The Judaism of Alexandria affected by pagan influences.

But Judaism in a cosmopolitan, commercial, and artistic city such as Alexandria could not avoid modification. It sought to confine itself within two of the five districts into which the town was divided, but there were Jewish houses of prayer in all parts of the city, and many Jews were scattered in all its quarters. Here the people of Israel were confronted with elements incongruous to the life and traditions which prevailed in Palestine. The culture of the Western world was there: the quick and versatile Greek, the masterful Roman, as well as the conservative and dreamy Egyptian. And thus it happened that in Alexandria the attempt was first made to reconcile Judaism and the religions and philosophies of the pagan world. A painstaking ingenuity discovered that the Old Testament taught Platonic and Stoic doctrines. It was even claimed that all that was beautiful and excellent in Greek thought had been taken from the Hebrew scriptures, and that Plato and

Pythagoras had learned much from Moses. The ancient stories were interpreted allegorically so as to remove any possible interference with this conclusion. The only way of understanding either Greek philosophy or Hebrew tradition was by reading the one from the other, by rendering the Old Testament in Greek terms and Greek philosophy in the light of Hebrew prophecy, and by considering both as having for the most part a common origin and a common purpose. Prolonged through several generations, and supported by masters such as Philo, the result of this attempt to harmonize the tradition of faith with the free conclusions of human intellect, to gather into one system practices, symbols, and truths from many systems, and to make Judaism possible intellectually to others than Jews, was the creation of an atmosphere in which curiously blended the warm, soft breezes from the Ægean and the sharper and more austere winds from Judæa. Here appeared the beginnings of a catholicity which sought not only to bring into happy relations men of varying races and religions, but also to use in common life thoughts, modes of expression, customs, and even legends and traditions, no matter what their origin, provided they tended to the one end and were adaptable to the same purpose.

Egyptian Judaism helped to prepare the way for a Catholic religion.

This eclecticism was both attractive and helpful, not so much in its conclusions, as in its spirit and methods. Conclusions which were faulty and lifeless soon passed away, but the effort to reach such was salutary, and its pro-

cesses tended to the development and broadening of the mind. Nor was this Græco-Hebrew philosophy confined to Alexandria. Though looked upon with suspicion alike by Palestinian Jews and by the more conservative of Greek professors, it spread from Alexandria to other parts of the Jewish world. So that, almost everywhere outside of Palestine, Christianity met Judaism, not as professed in Judæa, but rather as tinctured and modified by this spirit. Indeed, even when denying its tenets, the new religion, itself largely a development of the old Judaism, welcomed a light by which it could more clearly discern and define the truth it had received. In Alexandrian terminology Christian teachers found means whereby to express doctrines, the verity of which they felt, but which they were otherwise unable to make known either to themselves or to others. Especially was this the case with questions pertaining to the nature of God. The Alexandrian Jew had divined, as other Jews had not, the possibility and the mode of an eternal distinction in the Divine Unity; and thus the Christian believer was able to apprehend and to state the relationship between God and Christ, illustrated by the figures of Father and Son. These figures were neither unknown to nor misunderstood by other Jews, but they were not known or understood with the fulness and precision to which Christianity attained, helped not so much, perhaps, by Alexandrian philosophy, as by Alexandrian processes and methods.

Christianity profited by the liberal and enlightening spirit of Alexandria.

We do not look upon this foreign influence, therefore, as inimical to Christianity, but rather as helpful, if not necessary. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was designed for others than Jews, and it must needs be interpreted and explained in terms that could be understood by others. Indeed, it is doubtful, had they missed this influence, if the teachers of Christianity would have penetrated far into the depths of the religion they taught. They may have failed for want of the necessary apparatus ; nor is it to be supposed that Judaism contained all truth and paganism nothing but error, or that Jewish conceptions and Jewish methods of investigating and expressing truth were invariably and certainly the best.

Alexandrian philosophy so diffused that its action upon Christianity was not necessarily direct.

At the same time the extent and strength of the Alexandrian influence must not be overestimated. It may have been far less direct than some scholars have supposed. The traces which appear in some of the New Testament writings may have come, not from immediate contact with Alexandrian philosophy, but from ideas which, though Alexandrian in origin, had long since been assimilated by Jewish teachers and been adjusted to their thought, so as to have become indistinguishable. It may have been this element in the Jewish mind, as it appears to have been in the Oriental mind generally, which predisposed many both Jews and Greeks to Christianity. In its modifications it could scarcely have been as distinct and virile as in its pristine condition. Certainly as time went on,

these very conceptions and symbols of Christ in the New Testament which are called Alexandrian, are themselves, by men such as Pantænus, Clement, and Origen, interpreted in a sense differing from that held by Christendom at large; and the difficulties concerning the nature of Christ which beset the Council of Nicea largely arose from a nomenclature which springing out of one school of thought could not be understood in another school of thought. We may not think, therefore, of the Alexandrianism suspected in St. Paul, St. John, or the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as pronounced and vivid as it made itself known in much later theologians. Possibly, notwithstanding all that has been said, the difference in tone between those writers and the Synoptic writers is due to some element other than this; and at any rate it is a gratuitous and an unnecessary assumption, even if there are Alexandrian traces, which we have no desire to dispute, that they tend to the disparagement or the deterioration of the faith as it was imparted to the Church by Christ Himself.

Pantænus in a visit to India is said to have discovered a Hebrew version of the Gospel of St. Matthew (*cir.* A.D. 179).

The Gospel according to St. John was written probably between A.D. 80 and 110; if by the Apostle, as seems most likely, nearer to the former date than to the latter. It differs from the Synoptics, not only as regards date, but also in purpose, method, and largely in contents. The author had the advantage, at least in time, of the other Gospels and of all the Epistles, save

The Gospel according to St. John.

his own, but it is not easy to ascertain how far he was familiar with them. There are few evidences that he was influenced by them; nor do the differences between his Gospel and the Synoptics appear to have been of design. He neither corrects them nor assumes to supplement them,—though his Gospel is sometimes spoken of as an appendage or expansion. With the exception of some of the events connected with the beginning and the ending of our Lord's ministry, it is improbable that he observed more than a rough chronological order. He has before him a thesis or proposition, which, having stated in the prologue to his Gospel,—briefly, the Nature of the Word, the Rejection of the Word, and the Acknowledgment of the Word, —he proceeds to prove and illustrate by incidents and discourses which occurred in the life of the Master, without necessarily or apparently regarding the time in which they came. Unlike St. Luke, for instance, he does not undertake to write a biography or history of Christ, but, from the life of Christ, to maintain a definition of His nature and mission. Thus, that which in the case of the Synoptics is simply a record, becomes in the case of St. John a witness to a doctrine. He considers the acts and words of Jesus as evidence of the truth of the principles stated in the prologue. He desires to induce faith in those principles. This is clear from the formal conclusion of the Gospel: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written

in this book: but these are written, that ye
xx. 30, 31. might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

The analysis of the Prologue of St. John's Gospel.

The prologue contains three principal propositions, of the first two of which the intervening passages are expansions or explanations, and of the last the whole Gospel is the comment.

I. The eternal Existence, distinct Personality, and absolute Deity of Christ:

i. 1. (α) "In the beginning [*i.e.* not as in Genesis i. 1, but as in 1 John i. 1, and ii. 13, in that eternity which was before all things, and which has neither *prius* nor *posterius*; as see verse 3] was the Word,

(β) "And the Word was with God [in original τὸν θεόν, which denotes God the Father; and in that the Son was begotten, is implied a certain subordination to the Father, not in point of time, but in order of apprehension, for though the sunbeam is dependent on the sun, still not later than the sun, yet the sun cannot be without the sunbeam],

(γ) "And the Word was God." [The article being here omitted, the reference is to the Divine substance. The Son is not *the* God, as is the Father, for then there would be no distinction between the Father and the Son, but He has the same nature, essence, or substance as the Father.]

II. The Incarnation and its consequences:

i. 14. (α) "And the Word became flesh [σάρξ—man in the completeness of his nature: not

merely a body in which the Word took the place of the soul, as Apollinaris supposed; He became all that man is, really and sensuously such, and not figuratively or apparently. Nor should the pre-existence here indicated be lost sight of: "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh"—1 John iv. 2; 2 John 7]:

(β) "And dwelt [not as in an appearance or a visit, such as an angel might make, but sojourned or tabernacled, pitched his tent] among us: [and that so truly that we beheld His glory, the Shechinah, as of old Israel saw the Cloud of the Divine Presence,—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father],

(γ) "full of grace and truth" [*i.e.* He Himself in His life among us manifested plainly and convincingly that kindness which comes of the Divine love for man, and the purity and perfection of His character: "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," vv. 16, 17].

III. The Revelation of God in Jesus Christ:

(α) "No man hath seen God at any time [even i. 18.
though Moses gave the law, he did not see God, either bodily or spiritually, and could not know God so surely as to declare His nature and will; so that neither he nor any other prophet or psalmist could make a revelation of God, *cf.* vi. 46]:

(β) "The only begotten Son [some manuscripts read "God only begotten," but this is harsh, and occurs nowhere else] which is in the bosom of the Father [*i.e.* as of

a child with his parent, in fond and intimate union,—abiding and resting in perfect love, confidence, and knowledge],

(γ) "He [emphatically, and none else] hath declared him."

The references undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus.

No one disputes the identity of the Word with the only begotten Son; nor need there be any question that the Evangelist intended both expressions to describe Jesus of Nazareth. Both expressions are used as figures to illustrate a truth, which, as we have seen already in reference to the second of them, could not be illustrated otherwise. Now as the Son is the effulgence of the glory of God, the image of the Divine substance, so is He the expression of the Father, —as the word is the expression of the thought. The word and the thought are distinguishable, and yet the word dwells in, comes from, and is one with the thought. It is the word that makes known the thought, that commands according to the thought, which may be said to be begotten by the thought, and yet without which the thought itself can scarcely exist; for words shape thoughts as thoughts occasion words; so is the Son to the Father, and thus by figure He is called the Word of God. And thus, too, it is said, "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made. . . . The world was made [or became, came into being] through him." The thought or wisdom which devised and planned is set forth by the word which bade its fulfilment.

John i. 3, 10.

In using this figure care has to be taken lest

Definitions necessarily inadequate, and to be used with caution.

the Word be regarded either as an abstraction or a personification. The pre-existing Logos was not merely the sound or utterance of God, considered as the exercise or outcome of power, or even a poetical embodiment. If there be a subordination in the personality of the Son to the personality of the Father, as the terms used imply, there is none in the substance of God,—which is a unit both indivisible and illimitable. In that unit, no mind can either imagine bounds or devise divisions. Nor, after all our efforts at illustration, may the distinction between the Father and the Son be ascertained and defined exactly and clearly: by no means so simply as that between the terms "thought" and "word." At the utmost, man can only discover some qualities of God,—glimpses of a mystery beyond the application of epithets such as vast, profound, or wonderful. God is at least that which He has revealed Himself to be; but He is infinitely and indefinitely more than man can ever conceive or understand. Reason finds itself inadequate. As the finite cannot take in the infinite, any attempt at explanation which claimed or appeared to be exhaustive, clear, or simple would be open to more than suspicion. We can go only so far,—but to that point we certainly can go. The Evangelist contents himself by declaring a fact: the Word, that is to say, Christ Jesus, the Only-begotten of the Father, was God,—not an attribute of God, or a faculty of God, or a messenger of God, but God.

Partly from the use by the Alexandrian Philo

St. John modified the Alexandrian conception of the Logos.

of the term "Logos," and partly from an assumedly foreign colouring cast upon his theology, it has been alleged that St. John was under the influence, and wrote his Gospel in the light of Alexandrian philosophy. At Ephesus, or wherever out of Palestine he spent his later years, he could scarcely have escaped either Alexandrian thought, or that Orientalism which so forcefully inspired the men of Alexandria. And it goes without dispute that he used such terminology, no matter what its source, as suited his purpose. But his conception of the Logos was rather Hebrew than Egyptian or Greek, and may not be closely identified with that held by Philo. Into the history and intricacies of the term it is needless to digress. Philo had gathered the earlier Hellenic uses of the term, and associated with them Hebrew and other Oriental conceptions till the term no longer indicated merely the universal or divine reason of the world, but either a mediating function between God and the world, quasi-personal, or, even more personal, a vicegerent of God, a mediator between the Eternal and the ephemeral. The term meant more to Philo than to the older Greek philosophers, but it was not less plastic. Indeed, it is not easy always to discern the sense which he attaches to the expression. St. John recognizes no diversity of meaning. The Logos is the Son of God ; and the Son is not the Shadow of God, or the Second God, or a personified function of God, but God, of the one substance with the Father. In the prologue the Evangelist gives no

See, *e.g.*, Baldwin's *Dict. of Phil. and Psych.* ii., p. 30; Bigg's *Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, pp. 14–20.

explanation of his use of the term. He evidently expected it to be understood by his readers: took it for granted, in fact, that they were familiar with it. Outside of his Gospel and Epistles, and except in the Apocalypse, nowhere in the New Testament does the term "Logos" appear; yet its use and its meaning were neither strange nor enigmatical. Had they been they would have hindered, rather than have helped, the purpose of the Evangelist. Nor may the agreement of the prologue with the rest of the Gospel be overlooked. For instance, the personal and conscious pre-existence of the Word is reiterated by Christ Himself: "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is from God, he hath seen the Father"; "What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?" "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born [literally, became], I am"; "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"; "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." These utterances remind us of the declaration of John the Baptist, "After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me."

vi. 46, 62 (*cf.* iii. 13); viii. 58 (*cf.* Rev. i. 8); xvii. 5, 24.

John i. 30.

Even though it be admitted that the Evangelist, like the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, expressed himself in phrases diverse from those used by other writers in the New Testament, except possibly St. Paul, yet the truths or facts which he gave are in no respect different. The unity of the Father and the Son,

The terminology of St. John does not affect the Truth as set forth elsewhere in the N. T.

and the revelation of God only through the Son, are clearly shown by the Synoptics in such a declaration as the following, made, it should be observed, by Christ Himself: "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." In consonance with this fact our Lord assumes power and authority: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Such words would have been near to blasphemy had Christ not thought of Himself as more than man. Even the demons were said to have acknowledged Him as the Holy One of God. Nor did He refrain in the baptismal formula from placing Himself as Son between the Father and the Holy Spirit; or from implying His deity in the question, "If David calleth the Christ 'Lord,' how is he his son?" Indeed, the culminating charge against Him in the court of the High Priest was that He declared Himself to be the Son of God. He speaks of God as His Father, in a sense that no other man had a right to speak. Throughout the Synoptics, as throughout the Pauline Epistles, this Divine nature is acknow-

Matt. xi. 27; Lk. x. 22.

Lk. xii. 8, 9.

Matt. xi. 28.

Matt. x. 37.

E.g. Lk. iv. 34, 41; viii. 28.

Matt. xxviii. 19.

Matt. xxii. 45.

ledged. Were He not that which they imply and declare Him to be, and which He Himself claimed to be, those Gospels, indeed the whole New Testament, would be meaningless.

No diversity in the N. T. concerning the deity of Jesus Christ.

There is, therefore, reason to conclude that the doctrines concerning the deity of Christ set forth by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and many years later by St. John, are not developments or after-thoughts from the teaching of other Evangelists. Though differing in expression, they in no particular differ in fact. The writers of the New Testament are consistently one in believing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Son of the Father, the Word of God, eternally existing as God, and that He took to Himself human nature and lived in this world as man. Unless we are prepared to set aside honest and unprejudiced testimony, we must needs admit the force and clearness of their declarations : we say, honest and unprejudiced testimony, because *a priori* it is hardly conceivable that of their own thought or will these men would have invented a doctrine so profound and daring, and so certain to arouse violent and fierce opposition. Upon the primal fact of the deity of Christ, the Gospel was founded ; without it, there is neither reality or efficacy in His teaching or example, and His sacrifice and passion become vain and useless. If it be said that the writers of the New Testament, and the Church which accepted and formulated the doctrines propounded by them, were mistaken in their interpretation of the nature and life of

Christ, and failed either to receive or to understand the revelation which they believed had been vouchsafed them, we ask for proofs and hesitate to accept assertions. Were the evidence of such a theory forthcoming and conclusive, the Church would find herself in sorry case, and Christianity would be without a Christ, a religion without a God.

The mystery demands our reverence and submission.

But this brings us to the edge of mystery. Even as we weigh the words used by the writers of the New Testament to express the truth which had been given them, we become conscious of their inadequacy. They enable us to see clearer some phases of the truth; and yet the truth in all its parts and as a whole baffles both explanation and definition. We are satisfied, for instance, that the Lord Jesus is God, but no faculty we possess enables us to imagine, much less to understand, all that is meant by the term "God." Our failure is evident in such epithets when applied to God as sublime, majestic, unapproachable, and magnificent,—epithets vague and indefinite, because used of that which we cannot comprehend. Nor is it possible to speak intelligently of the mode or manner of the Divine existence: without beginning, unaffected by conditions of time or space, supreme, absolute, and complete, possessed of every possible grace and attribute, knowing all knowledge, and the source of all life,—the unique, solitary, eternal Being, holy, omnipotent, and gracious. The terms are easy to

use and are irrefutably true, but their full significance is beyond the reach of the human mind. Hence the impossibility of securing more than faint glimpses of the processes by which the Son of God determined and prepared Himself to save the world from sin.

The N. T. recognizes the pre-existence of Christ.

We are face to face with this aspect of the mystery when we recall those passages in the New Testament which speak of things done before or from the foundation of the world. The founding of the world marks the beginning of time: and this not merely as concerns the creation of the earth, but the coming into being of the universe itself. Neither man nor sin existed then; yet we are told that as the Redeemer of man from sin Christ was then foreknown or foreordained. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and that as the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world, so did God choose us in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world, from the beginning. Elsewhere we read that God saved us and called us, "according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," literally, "before times eternal":—"the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." So the Apostles and Evangelists wrought, "in hope of eternal life which God promised before the world began."

1 Peter i. 20.

Rev. xiii. 8.

John xvii. 24.

Eph. i. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 13.

2 Tim. i. 9.

Eph. iii. 9, 11.

Titus i. 2.

The plan of salvation prepared before the world was created.

Such passages support the doctrine, that the events of time were foreseen and decreed in eternity. God's knowledge is perfect and cannot

be added unto; and therefore it is impossible that there should be anything for Him to learn. Of necessity He knew before the worlds were made that man would form part of His creation; that man would enter into the conflict between sin and holiness, and in that conflict, in spite of his pristine innocence and better judgement, would fall and come under the power of evil; that the results of wrong-doing would be ignorance, misery, suffering, and disaster; and that man would be unable to recover or develop himself without help from a power higher than any this world could afford. The history of the human race lay before the Divine mind clearly and unmistakeably, when as yet the dust of earth lay unformed on the chaos of waters. It is significant, when we consider the depths of depravity and woe into which sin can cast man, and did indeed cast him, that God should have proceeded to create and endow him with a nature that could be so influenced. But none can doubt that God also foresaw the struggle that man would make against the overwhelming floods of wickedness. He saw more than a coward yielding to the waves. Some might so give up. But others would die, if die they must, as heroes, winning thereby a hero's reward; and, if death were driven back, others again would rise masters both of themselves and of the wrong which would subvert them. Moreover, in the balancing of good and evil in man, God saw that terrible as the evil might be, still mightier in hope and life was the good.

He knew possibilities in man that man himself has never dreamed of; and for those possibilities, even though those possibilities could be realized only by an experience sad, woeful, and bitter, perhaps to the verge of despair, He made man.

We cannot solve problems which God has willed shall remain hidden. Rom. xi. 33, 34.

Beyond all this, God foresaw the fact and the necessity of the Sacrifice of Christ. It is not for man to enquire into the wisdom and knowledge of God: "How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" We may assume that there can be no victory over sin, and therefore none of that blessing and joy in which the kinship of man to God is brought out, unless man first dies unto sin. But into the mystery of the determination of God to become man that as man He may thus die, and by dying lift man up to life and holiness, we may not enter. Suffice it for us to know, that severe and awful as that Sacrifice must have been, in God's mind the results which came from it were such as to justify it. For reasons known only to Him, He gave His Son to do for man that which man could not do for himself: thus placing a worth on man which man himself can scarcely imagine. It is not simply reverence and thankfulness which hinder us from enquiring into this fact, but much more our inability. We cannot understand; and could we do so, we do not know enough of the circumstances or conditions to form a judgement.

God designs and takes an immediate part in the salvation of man.

It is, however, evident, that in that eternity, that beginning before created life began, the Deity decreed and planned that the Word of God, the Son of the Father, should take to Himself human nature, and in this world live and die as man, for the salvation of man. We need not consider this determination as the result of a compact made between the Father and the Son, which would imply the possibility of a difference of will, perhaps of thought, but rather as the outcome of a desire, inherent and indivisible, as are the substance and mind of God. There are not three wills in the Blessed Trinity, but one will; and as each Person has the same Divine substance, so does each possess the one will. The word expresses the thought, and there is no diversity between them. Nor is it the event only that is thus ordained, but also all the details belonging to it, and the means to be used for bringing it about. Thus in the eternal ages the way of the Cross was laid down, the process of the preparation for the Passion ordered, and the incidents of Calvary determined. Everything, no matter how insignificant it may appear to human wisdom, was known to God and decreed by God. It does not seem possible to maintain any other conclusion, unless we deny the direct and active rulership of God. He cannot be supposed to have left the world He had created to take care of itself, and His plans for the redemption of man to work out themselves. And though we may not understand the process, yet we may be assured that His will must be

fulfilled. Otherwise His omnipotence is at fault; and, were that possible, He would not be God.

The eternal and unchangeable purpose of God to become man, and the three acts or conditions resultant therefrom.

This, then, first, from the record and interpretation of the life and mission of our Blessed Lord made by the writers of the New Testament; secondly, from the conclusions drawn and formulated by the Church from that record and interpretation; and thirdly, from an examination of the necessities of the conditions of salvation, as they become apparent in revelation and in experience,—in other words, from history, authority, and reason,—we gather, that, in the divine counsels, and for the deliverance of man from sin, it was determined that the Son of God should take unto Himself human nature, and in that nature fight the battle of the ages, and free His brethren from the slavery to which they had been reduced. He assumes this nature, so Sacred Scripture teaches us, not because the union of the human nature with the divine is the culmination of the development of man, and would have taken place had sin never entered into the world, and therefore the redemption of the race been unnecessary and uncalled for; but for the express purpose of saving sinners, of dying unto sin, and of destroying the power of Satan. That purpose was one of the efficient causes of the determination, without which the determination would not have been made. Three consequences come from this determination, each so stupendous and bewildering, so unique and inscrutable, that we can speak of them only

as miraculous,—meaning thereby that they transcend all human experience and every known law. These results or developments are the Incarnation of Christ, His Sinlessness, and His Virgin-Birth. Of these, the Incarnation is the most wonderful and the farthest from human comprehension, while the Virgin-Birth is the most easily appreciated.

THE INCARNATION.

The substantive "Incarnation" expresses the result of the operation, "The Word was made flesh." From the first the meaning has kept close to the etymology,—in-carnare, to embody or assume flesh; but used in this connexion *carnis*, with its Greek equivalent σάρξ, is understood to indicate not only the material of which the body, corpus, σῶμα, is composed, but human nature in its entirety. The Word becomes man, —and man consists of both body and soul. There were those who held that Christ's body was not really human, fashioned out of matter as are our bodies, but was formed of some celestial substance: and this notwithstanding the statement of Sacred Scripture that He was born of woman, as all the children of men are born of women: hence the declaration of the Creed, "Born of the Virgin Mary,"—not *per Virginem*, but *ex Maria Virgine*, i.e. *ex substantia Matris suae*. On the other hand, there were those who taught that His Person took the place of a human soul, so that the body served only as a tabernacle for His Divinity,—God simply

Cf. *The Glory after the Passion*, p. 118.

Gal. iv. 4.

dwelt in man, perhaps after the manner that the Spirit of God is said to dwell in His people: thus making Him only man in the flesh. Were He no more than that, then He did not become perfectly and completely human,—He assumed merely the form of man, and not the substance of man. Therefore by the term Incarnation we mean that the Son of God not only clothed Himself with flesh, but also with that flesh took to Himself the whole nature which is common to every man born into the world. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also in like manner partook of the same; . . . it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren." Thus, as the Gospels testify, as man, He increased in wisdom, He knew not the time of the Great Judgement, He prayed to the Father for strength and encouragement, and by innumerable and unmistakeable signs showed that he had a finite human intelligence,—a rational soul, as well as a human body. And so St. John affirms: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God."

Heb. ii. 14, 17.

1 John iv. 2, 3.

Moreover, in the Incarnation, it must be remembered that it is not the Divine nature, but a Divine Person, which assumed humanity. He who was God became also man, but the two natures did not intermingle so as to form a third, nor was the assumption of our substance unto His like the blending of a drop of vinegar

The Word Himself, in Person and not in Substance, becomes Man.

with the huge ocean, but each nature remains distinct: humanity is not made God, and divinity is not reduced to the limitations of humanity, else God would cease to be God and man would cease to be man. The Word possesses and exercises the attributes of both natures, without confusion: thereby being perfect God and perfect man, doing some things naturally as God and other things naturally as man, both natures sometimes concurring in the one purpose, so that, as Richard Hooker puts it, "there is a *co-operation* often, an *association* always, but never any mutual *participation*, whereby the properties of the one are infused into the other." Thus there is a sense in which Christ can say, "I and my Father are one"; and another sense in which He can say, "The Father is greater than I." So St. Paul in one place, speaking of the fathers, says, "Of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever"; and elsewhere, "The head of Christ is God,"—"the Son also himself shall be subject unto [*i.e.* put under] him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Hooker, *Eccles. Polity*, V. liii. 2.

John x. 30.

John xiv. 28.

Rom. ix. 5.

1 Cor. xi. 3; xv. 28.

Christ takes not to Himself the person of a man, but the nature of man.

But it must further be kept in mind, that the Divine Person of Christ took unto Himself human nature, and not human personality. Had He united Himself with the latter, then there would have been but one man benefited, and in Christ there would have been two persons. The Incarnation does not mean that a man has been lifted up into Deity, or that Deity has been conferred upon a man,—both

of which hypotheses are necessarily and utterly impossible,—but that God has taken to Himself human nature. The nature derived from the Blessed Virgin was human, but the Person who took that nature of her was divine. He was the Word of God, the Son of the Father. His personality remained for ever, exclusively and absolutely, in the Divine nature, and to Him worship was given and sovereignty ascribed by the Church. So that the Blessed Virgin became indeed the Mother of God; and though the title may be used extravagantly, perhaps to some minds offensively, yet it cannot be withheld without denying the Divine personality of Christ. The unity of the two natures in the one person may be illustrated, but not explained, by the union of the physical and spiritual in man,—a condition by no means free from mystery. The common faith is that man consists of a body and a soul, two distinct substances, each of which has properties of its own, which though controlled by the one consciousness are yet distinct from each other. The man possesses both separate substances and their respective qualities; but that which is predicated of the body may not be predicated of the soul, nor may the virtues or acts of the soul be attributed to the body. We cannot say that the body believes or repents; nor can we say that the soul has dimensions or performs physical acts. And yet the man is the subject of both. He is said to believe or to repent, to be tall or short, strong or weak. There is no confusion. In his

E.g. Dr. Charles Hodge, once Professor of Divinity in Princeton, *Sys. Theo.*, ii. 393.

person there is of the body and of the soul a communion of attributes, and according to his will he directs the faculties he possesses, no matter what their nature. In somewhat similar manner are related the one Person and the two natures of Christ: though we must beware of pressing the illustration too far.

The errors which have arisen concerning the Incarnation of our Lord: see Hooker's *Eccles. Polity*, V. liv. 10.

It is indeed true that we cannot comprehend or understand all that is meant by the term Incarnation, but, if we would hold the Catholic Faith, this much we must needs believe: the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His manhood, the conjunction of that Deity and that manhood, and the distinction of the one from the other. The Arians denied the Deity, and were condemned by the Council of Nicea, A.D. 325; the Apollinarians misinterpreted the human nature, and were condemned by the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381; the Nestorians divided Christ into two persons, and were condemned by the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431; and the Eutychians confounded the two natures, and were condemned by the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451. But for these misapprehensions and perversions of the Faith, the Church would not have endeavoured to set forth in definite form the facts concerning our Lord laid down in Sacred Scripture. Believers in the Lord Jesus held that they were taught of God, that their heavenly Father gave them His Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, and that the individual Christian had the witness within himself: in other words, that with faith came a gift or

sense by which the believer was led, consciously or unconsciously, to think and to do such things as were pleasing to God. Faith brought forth its fruits,—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born [begotten] of God." As the character of the results, so the character of the faith; and as no one could believe that Jesus was the Christ or that He had come in the flesh, but by the power of God, so was it to be taken for granted that they, whose conduct manifested the fruits of the Spirit, had the true and right faith. Had error never assailed that faith, the faith would have been left undefined. If the heretic objected to the Creed, he was himself the cause of the Creed; for, as in the instance of the Incarnation, when truth is denied affirmation becomes imperative. Thus, because these facts were questioned, the Church maintained, in the four General Councils just enumerated, and has been compelled ever since to maintain, that Christ is *truly* God, *perfectly* man, *indivisibly* human and divine, and *distinctly* continuing in both natures: ἀληθῶς, τελέως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀσυγχύτως. "Within the compass of which four heads," says Richard Hooker, "I may truly affirm, that all heresies which touch but the person of Jesus Christ, whether they have risen in these later days, or in any age heretofore, may be with great facility brought to confine themselves."

1 John iv. 1.

1 John iv. 2; John vi. 44, 45, 65.

But of all the passages of Sacred Scripture bearing on this subject none is more full or explicit than the following from the Epistle to

St. Paul's statement of the Incarnation; Phil. ii. 5–11.

the Philippians:—"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being [Gk. being originally, *i.e.* in the ages of eternity] in the form of God [*i.e.* having not merely the external accidents, but the essential attributes of God], counted it not a prize [a possession to be eagerly clutched and tenaciously kept] to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself [A.V. made himself of no reputation, = of no distinction, worth, value, or esteem], taking the form of a slave [*i.e.* not only the external semblance, but the characteristic attributes of a bond-servant,—see Matt. xx. 27, 28], being made in the likeness of men [in guise, semblance, such as was visible and known to those among whom He dwelt, and of whom He was]; and being found in fashion as a man [still more emphatically, in the habit and manner of men, as is common to men], he humbled himself [even more than he had done in taking a nature unspeakably lower than His own], becoming obedient [as a slave is obedient] unto death, yea, the death of the cross," [which death involved not only intense suffering, but also intense shame,—so shameful that no Roman citizen could be called upon to endure it]. By the careful use of his words, the Apostle has indicated the humiliation of Christ step by step from the highest glory to the lowest disgrace,—from supreme and divine kingship to the depths of a servitude ending in ignominious death. For this voluntary and inexpressible condescension,—"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted,"

See Bp. Lightfoot on *Phil.*, pp. 110, 113, 132.

—God gave unto Him the Name above every name, and ordained that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, "to the glory of God the Father." Lk. xiv. 10; xviii. 14; Matt. xxiii. 12.

The significance of the last words of this remarkable passage should not be overlooked. The exaltation, worship, and acknowledgment of Christ as Lord are not derogatory to the Father, but are to His glory. The purpose of the Incarnation, both in the humiliation it involved, and also in the results it accomplished, is to the praise and honour of God. Even the kingdom which Christ shall obtain is in the end to be delivered up to God, even the Father. Divine honours could not be given to a man without detracting from the duty due to God. Nor does the humanity which belongs to Christ win the Lordship. On the contrary, it is what He has done, in His own divine person, through the nature which He adopted, that is to the glory of the Father. He has not lost dignity or authority by passing through His earthly experience. The very name by which men had known Him in the flesh has become the name of the Word of God, and to the joy of the Father is made to rank with the ineffable name of the Deity, first revealed to Moses, and by Israel left unspoken. The Father is glorified in the Son. 1 Cor. xv. 24.

But the important word in this passage is that translated "emptied,"—"he emptied himself," or "he made himself of no account." In the original, the word "Himself" appears in an The Humbling of Christ manifested in the Incarnation.

emphatic position, to denote that of His own choice and volition He thus divested, reduced, or stripped Himself. The sentence must not be read so as to imply that He emptied "self" out, or in any way deprived Himself of His personality. What it was of which He emptied Himself is the subject of dispute and controversy; at this point, however, attention is directed to the humiliation as self-imposed and of wonderful graciousness. The latter quality is displayed in the assertion, that, though He was of an equality with God, and therefore one with Him in omnipotence and in all the attributes of Deity, yet, instead of using that equality as a means for personal exaltation and glory, and looking upon it as a matter for selfish grasping,—as one might say, as a reason or means for claiming and maintaining His rights,—He so looked upon the things of others, in lowliness of mind esteeming others superior to Himself, that He made His Deity the power whereby He might lower Himself into the condition into which man had fallen. The superiority He saw in man consisted only in a superiority of need; but that need drew out the divine love and compassion, to the setting aside of the divine glory and happiness. Christ used the very steps which lead up to the divine glory as the way down to human distress and shame. Although having the "form of God" (*μορφῇ θεοῦ*), He took the "form of a servant" (*μορφὴν δούλου*), thus preparing Himself for the act of Incarnation; and thence, having been made in the likeness of men, and having

been found with the voice, look, walk, and other habits of a man, He proceeded on farther into the humiliation,—day by day, and step by step, until at Calvary the last stage of His Passion was reached. This He did of His own will and accord: "I lay down my life. . . . No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John x. 17, 18.

The term "Kenosis" is used to express the action of the verb ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, Himself He emptied, but it leaves unsettled the dispute as to what it was of which our Lord stripped Himself. A question so profound should be regarded with reserve and hesitation; nor did the early theologians concern themselves with it other than incidentally, taking it almost as a synonym for the condescension shown in the Incarnation. Obviously the conditions after the Incarnation under which our Lord exercised His consciousness, or how far He ceased to use His divine powers, can be known to no one but Himself. Still some conclusions may be fairly reached. He could not, for instance, have deprived Himself of His divine nature, for it is as inconceivable that He could have laid aside the substance in which His person consisted, as that the divine nature could cease to be. Nor could He have divested Himself of His prerogatives, His self-consciousness, the fact of His eternal existence, or His oneness with the Father: for then we should have to imagine that the Word of God, the Son of the Father, had come to an end, which

The Kenosis [Κένωσις = an emptying or an emptiness: verb κενόω = to empty or to make void].

is an impossibility, and that He who was born of the Virgin was no more than man, which is contradicted by the evidence both of history and of experience. There were some theologians, for instance, they of Giessen in the seventeenth century, who taught that during His earthly career our Blessed Lord did so divest Himself of His divine attributes; but the Church Catholic has repudiated consistently and firmly an opinion so contrary to reason as well as to revelation. "I believe," says the Liturgy of the Coptic Jacobites, "that His Godhead was not severed from His manhood for one moment nor for the twinkling of an eye"; and with like emphasis the Liturgy of the Syrian Jacobites, referring to His death, declares, "His soul was severed from His body, albeit His Godhead was in no wise severed either from His soul or from His body." These Oriental liturgies reiterated the ancient faith, and show that the faith as held in the centres of Greek and Latin thought extended throughout Christendom. The universal belief has been, and still is, that He who for us men and for our salvation *came down* from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man [ἐνανθρωπησαντα = entered on, or put on, man; or as Eusebius puts it, ἐνανθρωποις πολιτευσάμενον = lived amongst men, as a citizen, one of themselves], did not thereby in any sense empty Himself of the Deity, or of its essential attributes or prerogatives; but as in heaven, so on earth, He continued God.

Brightman's *Eastern Liturgies*, p. 185.

Ibid., p. 97.

John iii. 13.

But while it was impossible that He should

abandon His divine nature, it was possible that He should put from Him all manifestations thereof. He did not empty Himself of the "form of God," that is, of His divine nature, when He took upon Him the "form of a servant," that is, the human nature ; but the position of equality with God, which he possessed by virtue of His Deity, He did not carry with Him as man, when He lowered Himself to the condition of man. He no longer displayed the glory or majesty of the divine nature, but accepted the limitations belonging to humanity. The humiliation was complete : as the Vulgate translates, "semetipsum exinanivit," —to live a real human life He surrendered, not the possession, but the exercise of divine omnipotence and divine omniscience. He does not exchange Deity for humanity, thereby substituting the one for the other, but in accepting the conditions of humanity He foregoes the conditions of Deity. While on earth He suffered His perfect Deity to be obscured by his perfect humanity. He was content to be a wanderer, without a place to lay His head, to feel pain, to endure weakness, calumny, and death, even though He was Lord of all, repressing the exercise of powers which would have freed Him from every circumstance and condition of the earthly life. We cannot understand the way or manner in which the same person can have attributes both finite and infinite,—how, for instance, the restrictions of human knowledge can exist together with divine omniscience ; nor can we do more than accept and leave unsolved certain conclusions,

The Kenosis consisted in the laying aside of the signs or tokens of the eternal glory.

such as the reality of the two natures, the boundless prerogatives of the one and the narrow limitations of the other, the possession of both by Him who was Son of God and Son of man, and yet could only have been really and truly the latter by sacrificing at least some of the qualities of the former. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich."

2 Cor. viii. 9.

THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST.

Holiness is an essential and inseparable attribute of Deity, and therefore, as with other such attributes, it was not possible for Christ to part from it when He took to Himself human nature. The purpose of the Prayer before the Passion was the sanctification of the disciples: our Lord pleading that in holiness His people might be one, as in holiness He and His Father were one. He does not ask on behalf of His disciples for oneness in organization or in doctrine, but for oneness in purity of life, which purity manifesting itself alike in every believer would be an evidence to the world that the Son in whom they trusted and by whom they lived came from the Father: in other words, a sign of the possession by the Father and the Son of the one attribute and the one purpose. That purpose was both the salvation of man from sin, and also His restoration to holiness. Not only should man be delivered from sin, but he should also proceed from a negative condition to one

See *Prayer before the Passion*, pp. 168–185.

of positive activity. Holiness is more than sinlessness,—more than a mere quiescent principle. It is a living ceaseless energy. God is sinless; but He is more than sinless, just as light is more than the antithesis of darkness, and life more than the opposite of death. In the language of the Old Testament, "righteousness" stood for that which is perfectly straight: the shortest distance from earth to heaven, the most direct path towards God. To swerve from that straight line meant sin; and the more a man wandered from it, the longer and the more difficult his journey to God,—if, indeed, he ever made it. He would be sinless if he remained in the path, even should he sit down and do nothing; holiness, however, demanded not only his remaining in the path, but also his pressing eagerly on to the end and purpose of the path. We cannot imagine, that, coming into the world to lift man up into holiness, Christ would strip Himself of the very quality and energy He desired for man, and would sacrifice Himself to secure to man. His mission was to undo what sin had done: to make of the slave a servant,—to bring him back to his heavenly Father, "whose service is perfect freedom," or, as the Latin original ran, "whom to serve is to reign." Out of holiness spring many virtues and blessings, such as peace, joy, health of mind and body, clarity of vision, unfailing hope, and ever-increasing love; but Christ came not to bestow these gifts apart from that holiness of which they are the fruits. A man must first be reconciled to God, before they

Ibid., p. 83.

Saulez's *Romance of the Hebrew Language*, p. 30. *Cf.* "We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep."

Second Collect at Evening Prayer.

can be His. And we cannot think that that grace which only can purify and restore man was lost by the Lord Jesus in the Incarnation.

Christ's own assertions of His sinlessness.

There is, indeed, in His human life, no sign or indication of the consciousness of sin. Unlike other teachers who have sought to guide men out of wrong-doing into righteousness, He makes no mention of personal transgression. He rebukes sin in others, but He acknowledges no sin in Himself. With man in his infirmities, poverty, sufferings, limitations, He makes Himself one,—a brother in the fulness of His human nature; but He never sets Himself with him in sin. "Which of you," He demands of the Pharisees, "convinceth me of sin?" And by "sin" He does not mean "error in argument" or "falsehood,"—a sense which ἁμαρτία never has in the Septuagint or the New Testament,—but that missing of the mark, that wandering from the path, the evils of which He came to avert and the tendency to which He sought to correct. He appeals to His sinlessness of life as a pledge for His truthfulness of word. When He asked the ruler who had addressed Him as "Good Master," perhaps thinking thereby to ingratiate himself, "Why callest thou me good?" it was not to imply that He was not good, but to enforce the fact of His oneness with God, who only is good. None should call Him good who did not believe Him to be God. He was more than a teacher, even more than a teacher sent from God, as Nicodemus acknowledged Him to be: He could well show the way of

John viii. 46.

Mark x. 18; Luke xviii. 19.

eternal life, seeing that He Himself had violated no law that led to life. He, and He only, could say, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him;" "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to accomplish His work." So to the disciples, at the Last Supper, as though to deny that there was any element in Him for effective accusation or sure temptation, He declared, "The prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in me." Such statements, indeed the impression which seems to be created naturally by the reading of the Gospels, and the unprejudiced study therefrom of the character of Christ, lead one to the conclusion, that He in whom "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" did not sin and could not sin.

John viii. 29; iv. 34.

John xiv. 30.

Such at least was the belief of the early disciples. He was, says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin":—though in every respect He suffered the calamities, sorrows, and trials that flesh is heir to, yet in thought and word and deed He maintained His integrity. In another place, speaking of Him as our High Priest, the same writer calls Him "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners": the first three epithets being descriptive of the three directions in which moral character exercises itself, and thereby shows its symmetrical and incorruptible perfection,—holy, as regards God [not ἅγιος, which commonly refers simply to setting apart, or dedication, but ὅσιος, which always implies moral purity and holiness, and is

The first teachers of Christianity held firmly to the fact of the sinlessness of their Lord.

Heb. iv. 15; vii. 26.

See Lindsay's *Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 376.

used only in connexion with actual character]; harmless, as regards others [ἄκακος, free from all deceit and falsehood, doing harm to no one, but, on the contrary, desiring and striving for the good of all]; and undefiled, as regards Himself [ἀμίαντος, untouched by any stain of moral impurity: as unblemished in soul as the high priest was required to be in body]. Being such, He contracted no evil, even though He mingled with sinners, ate and drank with them, and ministered to them. Distinct in this particular from them, association and intercourse with them did not leave stain or shadow upon Him. To the same purpose, St. Paul strengthens his argument for reconciliation to God upon the
2 Cor. v. 21. fact, that "Him who knew not sin [*i.e.* by personal experience], on our behalf he made to be sin," *i.e.*—as many authorities, *e.g.* St. Augustine and St. Ambrose interpret, a sin-offering; or, as others think, the representative of sin—the sin of the world. The context shows that it could not mean that God had reduced the sinless Christ to the condition of sin. So, probably with Isaiah liii. 9 in mind, St. Peter describes
1 Peter ii. 22. Christ as one "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth"; and St. John, after setting forth the reason for the making known of
1 John iii. 5. Christ,—viz. by expiation and sanctification, "to take away our sins," lifting from us more than the guilt, even the power of sin,—adds, "And in him is no sin." On this point there was no
1 John iii. 8. doubt in the mind of these early believers. "The Son of God was manifested, that he might

destroy the works of the devil." Nor has the Church ever wavered concerning this fact. "Christ in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only except; from which He was clearly void, both in His flesh and in His spirit."

Art. XV of the XXXIX.

There are readers of the New Testament who will admit all this, thereby appearing to hold stedfastly to the fact of the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus, and who yet contend that He was subject to error and made mistakes. It is true that mistakes can be made without sin being necessarily either present or involved; even the angels in heaven are not free from the possibility of error: at least, St. Jude speaks of angels which kept not their first estate. But it is far from certain that the instances commonly cited as showing errors or mistakes in our Lord's life can bear the interpretation laid on them. No one, for instance, can seriously regard His tarrying behind in Jerusalem, on His visit there with Joseph and Mary, as void of a justifiable moral purpose; or His driving the money-changers from the Temple; or his denunciations against the Pharisees. It is difficult to detect the error even in the cursing of the barren fig-tree, or in His sending the demons into the herd of swine: the motive or the reason which He had in mind and in which alone could be the error, is not revealed. And if we knew more than has been recorded, we should not feel more justified in refusing to suppose He made any mistake in His relation to Judas. The charges claimed to be

Though free from sin, our Lord is supposed by some critics not to be free from error.

Jude 6, *i.e.* angels which indeed fell into sin.

sustained by these incidents have been met again and again, and their refutation is as conclusive as their antiquity is venerable. The conviction that "He hath done all things well," not only in His making the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak, but in all that He ever said or did, possesses the heart and mind of Christendom. He had the right judgement in all things; and even should mistakes not have the nature of sin, to most Christian people the supposition that He made, or could make, any mistake whatsoever is most repugnant.

Mark vii. 37.

Other critics go farther and maintain that He committed sin.

By some objectors to the fact of His sinlessness, these instances are advanced, not as evidences of error or mistake, both innocent and excusable, but as proofs of actual sin. In doing these things, He did wrong, clearly and positively. Such critics discern vindictiveness in the cursing of the barren fig-tree, lack of charity in dealing with the Pharisees, inconsideration in the destruction of the swine of Gadara, disrespect in His treatment of His Mother, and injustice in reference to Judas. But these opinions can be only conjectural; and they can be reasoned away by the same process of personal prejudice. Either wrong or right may be discovered in these incidents according to the desire of the enquirer. If, however, wrong be the conclusion, that conclusion has to justify itself against the testimony to the sinlessness of Christ given by those who knew Him, and which was manifested in His own life. Prejudice either way, we admit, is no argument;

but the readiness to interpret the acts of Christ unfavourably is frequently allied with a distinct and positive hatred of Christ. To the believer the existence of such hatred is well-nigh impossible of credit; yet competent observers affirm its reality. Probably no reasoning would remove it; any more than, on the other hand, the arguments of its advocates would shake the conviction of the believer. The question resolves itself into this alternative: Shall these incidents be interpreted according to the personal feelings of the critic, or according to the drift of the New Testament teaching on the sinlessness of Christ?

Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Christ*, p. 4.

But the objections to the doctrine of the sinlessness of Christ, founded on a prejudicial interpretation of these occurrences, may be met by more positive argument than this; and though we need not go over again ground that has been traversed these many centuries, till one is surprised there should be any attempt at a revival of ancient and worn-out cavils, yet, as an illustration of the answers that have been made, we may enquire into one difficulty which seems to have more in it than any to which we have referred. Before doing so, let this be observed of the incident of the barren fig-tree, which is perhaps the hardest to be understood of all the miracles: before the season of fruit, and contrary to the nature of its kind, it put forth its leaves, thereby furnishing a type of that character which, unjustified by works and anticipating the time for such, ostentatiously pro-

Many refutations have been made of the charges based upon some Evangelical narratives: see, *e.g.*, Trench on the Miracles.

Viz. that of our Lord's acceptance of John's baptism, which was a baptism of repentance.

claims its professions of vitality. As the tree expended its vitality in leaves, rather than in fruit, so do they invite destruction who put their energies into a display of pretensions, instead of reserving them for such good works as shall be for the benefit of men and the glory of God. Divine charity leads us to examine such, if haply, by some unexpected chance, we may find fruit thereon; divine justice follows the exhaustion and deceit by the withering of death.

The principle underlying the destruction of the Barren Fig-tree found to be of wide application.

Of those who came to John the Baptist desiring to be baptized, some were bidden by that preacher of repentance to bring forth fruits worthy of their repentance. Such evidently were willing to accept baptism as a profession, but not as a consecration. They would acquiesce in the observance of the rite, but they were not ready to pass through the inward and spiritual cleansing of the life, which alone made the washing of water of any real worth. The Baptist demanded amendment of life, without which ceremonial ablutions were not only meaningless, but also misleading and false. His clear and uncompromising warning has never been forgotten,—the same lesson as that of the Fig-tree. The lesson John taught beside the Jordan, and the lesson Christ taught on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, for all time are one and the same; the uselessness of putting forth leaves and making professions, when neither fruit nor good works go with them. And that which is true of the baptism of John is equally

true of Christian baptism: as necessary conditions, faith and repentance.

How the principle applied to the Lord Jesus in coming to John for baptism.

But if these conditions which applied to the multitude which came to the baptism of John applied also to the Lord Jesus, then His desire that John should baptize Him indicated a consciousness of sin and an acknowledgment of repentance. That John, however, did not so think is implied by his question, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Possibly this may have meant no more than a recognition of the superior moral qualities of Jesus,—superior, that is to say, to John's attainments, as John's were superior to those of most of the people who came to his baptism. The knowledge of this superiority may not have come from personal acquaintanceship with Jesus: for, notwithstanding the kinship of the Blessed Virgin and the wife of Zacharias, the narratives of the Baptism preclude the supposition of such acquaintance; on the other hand, tidings of the pure and beautiful life of the Nazarene may have reached John, or there may have been something in the face or voice or demeanour of Jesus that convinced John of His exalted character. But John's question, together with his attempt to prevent or hinder the baptism, probably arose from a conviction of more than Christ's comparative righteousness. In view of the evidence concerning the sinlessness of Christ which we have already gathered, we feel that this conjecture is not without justification. Nor should the answer of Christ to John be overlooked. He

Matt. iii. 14.

Dean Alford holds the opposite opinion: *Gk. Test.*, i. 24.

did not seek to remove the thought in John's mind. John realized his own need, and felt himself unworthy of baptizing one so holy as this Man of Galilee; and Jesus set aside John's conclusion without denying it. Not because of sin, but for the reason that He had not committed sin, and therefore had naught to repent of, our Lord replied, "Suffer me now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Christ did not require the washing of regeneration, or even the grace which we may conceive to have been given in John's baptism, but He desired the outward and visible sign of that consecration to which He had devoted Himself. While it is true that He was made in the likeness of sinful man, and, being made sin for us, He was numbered with the transgressors, it is not necessary to regard His baptism as in any sense vicarious or representative. It was a baptism not of repentance, but of mission. It had its pre-requisite, not in sorrow for sins, which He had neither committed nor assumed, but in the dedication of Himself to the purposes of His earthly life. In His human nature, by this act, He acknowledged Himself as a man set apart and ordained for the Sacrifice by which He should save His people from their sin. The water which ordinarily symbolizes the washing away of defilement, here becomes the figure of devotion. Herein appears the fulness of righteousness; and, according to the eternal will, He passes not from death into life, but from life into death, there to meet and conquer the enemy that had ruined the creation of God.

An objection to this interpretation appears in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, a work which some scholars suppose may have been the basis of St. Matthew's Gospel, and which certainly was known and used in the second century. Of the twenty-four fragments of this Gospel which have come down to us, the third, preserved by St. Jerome, reads as follows: "Behold, the Lord's mother and brothers said to him, John the Baptist is baptizing for remission of sins; let us go and be baptized by him. But he said to them, What sin have I done that I should go and be baptized by him? unless perhaps what I have now said is ignorance." In a treatise on Re-baptism, written in the fourth century and wrongly attributed to St. Cyprian, it is stated that in the *Preaching of Paul*, a book scarcely later than the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the reader will find, "contrary to all Scripture, both Christ confessing his own sin—[although he alone did no sin at all]—and almost compelled by his mother Mary unwillingly to receive John's baptism." Both the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the *Preaching of Paul* may have been of heretical origin, but they are of undoubted antiquity, and, though the tradition they preserve may have been false, and may have been invented for polemical use, yet the documents show that in very early times the motive for our Lord's baptism came into question. St. Matthew is the only Evangelist who records a motive, and this he does in Christ's own words. But the possibility is slight that the writer of the Gospel

Some ancient evidence against the Sinlessness of Christ.

Glory after the Passion, p. 189.

Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*, Part II., Vol. ii., § 1, p. 290.

Retract. de Bapt., § 17.

which bears his name knew of any tradition running counter to that which he had received, or that he inserted this clause in his narrative to combat an erroneous opinion. Nor, on the other hand, is it certain that the writers of the fragments just quoted knew of the tradition preserved in St. Matthew, or that either writer had seen the statement of the other writer. It does not follow, however, as some have supposed, that the expression in the fragment from the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, "Unless perhaps what I have now said is ignorance," is so natural and characteristic that it could not have been an invention of an antagonist of the belief in the sinlessness of Christ. The expression seems designed to suggest a doubt in His own mind of His moral perfection,—a doubt also implied in the invitation given Him by His mother and His brethren. In the other quotation Christ is declared to have come to baptism confessing His own sin,—a statement far from corresponding with the record in the canonical Gospels, and which one cannot think was made without a purpose running against the prevailing conviction. While possibly the tradition may owe its origin to a simple desire to account for an event which without some explanation seemed to be without purpose, it is more likely to have come from some sect, such as the Ebionite, that repudiated the deity and incarnation of Christ. At any rate, the authority of the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the *Preaching of Paul* is too precarious to set it against that of St. Matthew

and of the general teaching of the New Testament.

The difficulty created by the doctrine of Original Sin.

These objections to the doctrine of the Sinlessness of Christ, however, though refutable, or at least dubious, depended for whatever vitality they possessed upon a conception of human nature. How was it possible for Christ to be born of woman, and escape the taint of moral corruption? Some diversity of opinion prevails among theologians as to the nature of original sin; but none as to its existence,—"it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam." The early Fathers had no doubt of the universality of human corruption, and Pelagius who thought otherwise received his condemnation at the time in the answers of Augustine, Jerome, and Fulgentius, in a decree of the Council of Carthage, A.D. 412, and, through the ages since, in the consensus of Christendom. The Council of Trent clearly reiterated the ancient and universal doctrine on this subject: —Adam, being defiled by the sin of disobedience, transmitted into the whole human race, not only death and pains of the body, but also sin, which is the death of the soul; this sin is transfused into all by propagation, not by imitation; infants newly born have need of remission of sin. From these conclusions there is among Christian people no dissension: but if the conclusions are well founded, and the Son of God became truly man, how did our Lord avoid the common infection? The fact of the Virgin-birth

The Passion of Christ, pp. 359–371. Art. IX of the XXXIX.

Decretum de Peccato Originali, §§ 2, 3, 4.

is no answer to this question, for the taint can be inherited from one parent as really as from two. If the mother be sinful, the child is also sinful, irrespective of the father. The holiness of Jesus was certainly not secured by the exclusion of an earthly father.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.

To evade the force of this question and to maintain the doctrine of the sinlessness of Christ, as early as the fourth century the hypothesis was mooted that the Blessed Virgin was freed from sin in the moment of her conception. In response to Pelagius, who had declared that it was necessary for our religion that the Virgin should be regarded as sinless, St. Augustine, having expressed the opinion that, for the honour of our Saviour, it was best not to hold any talk about the sins of His mother, asks, "How do we know what more grace was bestowed on her to overcome all sin, who had the honour to conceive and bring forth Him who certainly had no sin?" But in the course of time this cautious supposition hardened into definite assumption, till after some centuries of indecision, about the year 1300, the great Franciscan scholar, John Duns Scotus, advanced and defended the doctrine of the total exemption of the Blessed Virgin from sin; and this against the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, who held that Mary was only sanctified in the womb after her body was already informed by the soul, and further argues that if the Virgin "had not incurred the stain of original guilt," she would have stood in no need of being saved

See Wall on *Infant Baptism*, Vol. i. p. 251.

Aldis and Arnold, *Cath. Dict.*, p. 428.

and redeemed by Christ, whereas Christ, as the Apostle declares, is the Saviour of all men. Notwithstanding the opinion of so exalted a theologian as St. Thomas, in 1854 Pope Pius IX decreed that "the doctrine which holds the Blessed Virgin Mary to have been, from the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of mankind, preserved free from all stain of original sin, was revealed by God, and is, therefore, to be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful." In defining and pronouncing this doctrine, the Supreme Pontiff claimed to be under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

An attempt to show that the MS. of St. Thomas in this place has been corrupted "does not admit of serious defence."

See Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. ii. p. 211.

By this decree the churches of the Roman obedience have been bound to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception,—some may think, possibly to the loosening of fellowship with the Catholic Church ; but its rejection by the other churches of Christendom, and its condemnation by many controversialists, ought not to hinder us from doing it justice. Undoubtedly it has been grossly misinterpreted ; and by their reckless and overstrained figures, its advocates may not be without some blame for such. Neither they who accept the decree nor they who condemn it have been always kind and true in their treatment of her who was blessed above all women. She has been made to suffer from exaggeration and from depreciation. But, though this doctrine tends to the former fault, it would be unfair to interpret the decree to mean that the Blessed Virgin had

What the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception really means.

of herself any merit, or that she was freed from original sin other than by the act of God. Not of nature, but by grace, the grace itself occasioned by the merits of Christ, did she become exempt from sin, both hereditary and actual. Even should it be admitted that from the very beginning of her existence it was necessary that she should be exempt from sin, yet it does not follow, as St. Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, suggested, that propriety demands not only a sinless mother for a sinless son, but an unbroken chain of sinless ancestors to the beginning of the race. The dogma teaches that Mary, and she only, was by the gracious interposition of God severed from the sin which otherwise would have come to her, and made incapable of the sins which otherwise she would have committed. She was the first, says Bossuet, purified by the precious blood of Christ. Still the subtilty of predicating two conceptions: one active, from which the body proceeds, and the other passive, in which by a creative act of God, the soul, possibly simultaneously, possibly forty days later, is infused into the body,—makes the inheritance of sin come from the parents, since it is impossible to think that God, who creates the soul, is the author of sin, or that God would inflict on an unconscious and impotent soul a tendency to sin, because of a sin which had been committed by the progenitors of its body, either immediate or remote. This subtilty is pure speculation; were it true, the question of original sin would lead either to Manichæism or to irretrievable confusion.

Epis. 174: St. Bernard, bo. 1091; founded the Cistercian house of the Bright Valley, 1115; d. 1153.

Quoted in *Cath. Dict.*, p. 428.

Notwithstanding the authority with which the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated, and the learning with which it has been defended, it cannot be forgotten that centuries passed before the fact it maintains was so much as suspected, and that for many more centuries after it came to light, though it was advocated by powerful theologians, it was also denounced by others whose judgement, scholarship, and soundness in the faith were undoubted, and in many instances unexcelled. Unfortunately discretion and charity were rarely found on either side. Pressed on by fierce and unflagging zeal, supported it is true with an erudition amazing for its intricacies and subtilties, if not for its breadth and depth, the Dominicans who opposed the theory and the Franciscans who defended it, not only divided the Church into definite parties, but also fought each other with unhesitating bitterness and unscrupulous abuse. For ingenuity and resourcefulness in inventing miracles and strange devices to support the side of the controversy they had espoused, the Dominicans seem to have been superior to the Franciscans,—at least, in 1508, four members of their order were degraded and burnt at Berne for one of the most audacious impostures known in history. A youth of weak and credulous character, who had lately joined the order, was led to believe that the Blessed Virgin had appeared to him in a vision, and charged him to inform Pope Julius II that she had been conceived in sin. In spite of the stigma which she impressed on

The controversy on the Immaculate Conception brought much learning and no little equivocation.

See, *e.g.*, an account of this imposture in Burnet's *Letters from Switzerland*, [1686] pp. 30–42; Misson, in his *New Voyage*

to Italy, [1739] Vol. ii. p. 487, adds to the story the names of the friars and the novice; and Keysler [*Travels*, ed. 1760, Vol. i. p. 183] says that in a cell in the Dominican Church the hole in the wall was still shown through which came the supernatural voices to the novice.

See Robertson, *Hist. Chris. Ch.*, Vol. viii. p. 378.

Misson, *ut supra*, ii. 245; Robertson, vii. 488.

one of his hands with a nail, the youth became suspicious, and, though attempts were made to poison him, he managed to make known the deceits which had been practised on him. The exposure of this fraud told against the Dominicans and strengthened the advocates of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. But the convent at Berne did not necessarily represent the whole order; and the provincial of the Dominicans was one of the judges who condemned the principals in the plot. More than a century earlier than this, the Franciscans pretended that St. Bridget had received a revelation in their favour; but, by way of answer, the Dominicans alleged that St. Catharine of Siena, a prophetess of equal celebrity, had been given a contrary revelation, that the Virgin was conceived in sin as well as other women. The Dominicans, however, fell into desperate straits. They suffered much for their opinions. Bishops persecuted them, and universities shut them out. Paris, Cologne, and Mentz refused to admit any theological student, or to confer any degree, except on condition of swearing to maintain the Immaculate Conception. It was reported that a Dominican at Cracow was struck dead whilst preaching against the doctrine; and that, on his way to the schools to defend the honour of the Virgin, every day an image of her bent its head to Scotus as a mark of favour. The populace took sides against them, molested them in the streets, and ridiculed them in placards. Moreover, a Franciscan, Sixtus IV, ascended the

papal throne, and issued two bulls in favour of the contention of his order. Even though, as a proof of their devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the Dominicans had instituted the brotherhood of the Rosary, they lost power and sympathy.

The objections to the doctrine remain irrefutable, though they have been set aside.

And yet the Franciscans had no scholar more distinguished for his learning and devotion than the Dominican, Juan de Torquemada, Cardinal de Turrecremata. This eloquent, scholarly, and vigorous defender of the papal claims, born at Valladolid in 1388, and died 1468, is not to be confused with his cousin, Tomas de Torquemada, of unenviable memory, the Inquisitor-general of Castile and Leon in the fifteenth century. Not this Tomas, to whom the work is sometimes ascribed, but the Cardinal was the author of an exposition of the Books of Psalms, a passage of which is paraphrased by Richard Hooker. A treatise written by Juan on the subject of the Immaculate Conception, containing upwards of seven hundred closely printed quarto pages, was published at Rome in 1534. Apparently he summed up all that had been or could be said on the question. Canon Liddon, who carefully examined the book, draws attention to its appeals to authority, and to its hard scholastic argument. "It shrinks from no encounter with the maintainers of the doctrine which it impugns; it traverses, with fearless confidence, and according to the learning and methods of its day, with exhaustive completeness, the whole field of the controversy." Torquemada cites Scripture, saints, and doctors, to prove that "the blessed

E.g. by Prothero, in his *Psalms in Human Life*, p. 178.

Eccles. Polity, V. xxxvii. 2.

Bampton Lectures, pp. 432 532–6.

Virgin Mary did in fact contract original sin." He shows that all human beings without exception who descend from Adam by way of natural propagation, are conceived in original sin. He declares that there are twenty points of difference between those who assert and those who deny the immaculate conception of the Virgin; and he maintains vigorously that Christ alone had no sin. The evidence that Torquemada was not singular in his opposition to this dogma is shown by the confidence and honours bestowed on him by the then reigning Pope, Eugenius IV, by the hesitation of the Council of Trent to define the doctrine, and by the further fact that four centuries more went by before the Supreme Pontiff made it an article of faith. It should also be observed, that the papal decree establishes the dogma, not on argument, or on the authority of Sacred Scripture, or of the Fathers, or of the Church itself, but upon the Pope's personal experience. The fact, which had been so long unknown or obscure, was revealed to him by God. Rightly, then, may Canon Liddon ask, "Can the assertion that the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin is a certainty of faith, be rested upon any other ground, than an assumption in the modern Church of some power to discern and proclaim truths which were altogether unknown to the Church of the Apostles?"

But the doctrine does not appear to be one of necessity.

The ingenuity of this effort to account for the Sinlessness of Christ should be appreciated, even though it be considered defective. It

secured recognition in spite of the arguments and antagonism of mighty scholars, and of the teaching of Sacred Scripture ; and to-day multitudes of devout and thoughtful Christian people find satisfaction in it, and see in it nothing contrary to reason or revelation. Possibly the doctrine may be so explained as to remove some of the difficulties which history proves were supposed to attend it ; and possibly, too, having penetrated the mazes and jungles of a scholasticism distant and foreign, both in method and in philosophy, and having discovered the bearing of this hypothesis upon the spiritual life, the modern mind may unravel the threads of the controversy, and realize that the labour of the centuries has not been thrown away. But the supposed necessity for this dogma, and indeed many of the objections to the doctrine of our Lord's moral perfection, may be refuted, or at least weakened, by a more careful appreciation of the nature of the Divine holiness.

The holiness of Christ, pervading His whole Person, leaves in Him no place for sin.

The fact of the Sinlessness of Christ is more easily determined than explained ; indeed, it is a part of a mystery that can never be wholly made known. But it is not necessary to think of it, as in itself, a miracle or an extraordinary thing. Had God interposed in the conception of the Blessed Virgin, as the Roman decree assumes He did, the act would have been so exceptional that it could only have been regarded as miraculous. It would have been no less miraculous had He done so in the con-

ception of our Blessed Lord; but the evidence of such intervention is no more certain in the one instance than in the other, and in both it was equally unnecessary. Christ was born as all men are born, and in the entire and absolute completeness of human nature. Sin, however, pertains to, and is a tendency or act of, the person, and is not an essential quality in the nature which differentiates man from all other created beings. If it were, then man, to be perfectly man, though redeemed and sanctified, would retain sin for ever. It is not the nature which makes the man sin, but man who makes nature sin. He infuses sin into his being, and thereby makes that being sinful. Sin is an extraneous, *unnatural* quality, to the absorption of which he is susceptible. He is this, for the reason that he himself, as well as his nature, is derived from his parents, who transmit to him the tendency which they themselves inherited. But while the human nature of Christ came from His mother, His person was divine and not human. Against whatever frailty or imperfection His human nature may have received from her is set His personal and essential holiness,—the holiness which made Him one with the Father. He descended into that human nature; and made it the means of bringing Himself to man. Whatever miracle there was, it did not lie in His retaining that holiness which had been His as God before time began. Even if sin had passed from the Virgin into that nature which He took from her, sin was

Art. IX of the XXXIX speaks of original sin as the fault and corruption of the *nature* of every man, and declares that man is of his own *nature* inclined to evil, and that this *infection of nature* remains even in the regenerate; we are using the term in another sense, which is, however, both plain and legitimate.

powerless, lifeless, hopeless, in the presence of that holiness. Had corruption or taint been imparted, it would have evaporated and passed away before the brilliancy of that unsullied purity. So infinite and all-conquering was that holiness, that any possibility of sin became negligible, non-existent. He could not sin, any more than at the same time light can be darkness, or life death. Contact with evil could not affect Him. He remained as untouched by wrong, as the sun is untouched by the miasma of the swamp. It is not a question of miracle, but, on the contrary, a simple, natural necessity. The Blessed Virgin could not transmit a tendency or a disease to One incapable of receiving it. That incapacity, as it abides eternally in Deity, so did it remain with Him from the moment of conception to the moment of death. It made it impossible for Him to sin. The peccability or the impeccability of His mother, in this respect, had no influence on Him. He could not take from her that which could not live in Him.

Christ was of necessity, and not of grace or expediency, morally perfect.

Hence we feel justified in maintaining the truth of the Sinlessness of our Divine Redeemer, so abundantly set forth in the New Testament. We do not claim to understand the mystery which envelops the fact. There are questions that must remain unanswered. Some factors which might enable us to get nearer to the solution of the problem are hid from us. But we are not concerned with the theories of sin, either original or actual, which have perplexed

theologians, sometimes by their severity and sometimes by their laxity, seeing that we are considering One who knew no defilement and did no wrong. Original sin may so operate in others, that by it, according to the Thirty-nine Articles, man is very far gone from original righteousness, or, according to the Westminster Confession, has become utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil; but this condition did not affect Him. Nor are we troubled at speculations concerning the origin of the individual soul,—whether it comes out of a previous state of existence, or is transmitted from parent to child, or is created separately by divine operation, —inasmuch as our Blessed Lord used His human soul, as He used His human body, only as a means to bring Himself into union with mankind. His Sinlessness, we repeat, comes not from miracle, though to us it seems miraculous, but is a quality of His being, natural and necessary, and, like the incarnation, it transcends all other human experience.

An informing book on the subject is Ullmann's *Die Sündlosigkeit Jesu*.

THE VIRGIN-BIRTH.

They who believe in the Incarnation and the Sinlessness of Christ, have little difficulty in accepting the doctrine of the Virgin-birth. The Virgin-birth being physical, rather than spiritual or moral, is more easily appreciated than the other conditions in the process whereby the Son of God became also the Son of man,—and for that very reason is more readily open to attack.

The opposition to this doctrine comes chiefly from those who do not recognize the supernatural element in Christianity. If Christ be no more than man, or if He be only man with certain unique or rare qualities imparted to Him, either by virtue of His character or by the arbitrary will of God,—so that in a sense He may be said to have divinity, but in no sense deity,—there was neither Incarnation nor Sinlessness, and the Virgin-birth had no importance. Indeed, under those circumstances, the probability of its having happened becomes exceedingly slight. But this is to exclude from the religion of Jesus Christ its constituent principle, and to make it a philosophy purely ethical and human. Thus reduced, it would scarcely be the Christianity of the New Testament and the Catholic Creeds. In the desire so to reduce that religion, and, according to the will of some, to do away with it altogether, even when thus attenuated, the attack upon the Virgin-birth is carried on vigorously and persistently. That fact is so far-reaching in its effects, and so necessary to the structure of Christianity, that if it be broken down much else, possibly the whole fabric, comes down with it. There are, indeed, many who stumble at the Virgin-birth, and think it incredible, from motives that have no such destructive force. They hold that such an article of faith is a hindrance rather than a help to religion, and that Christianity could exist independently of it. But, though they honestly desire by removing it to save from death a religion which has helped so many

children of earth into life, it will be found that the Christ they would present has been stripped of His divinity and its attributes, is purely a human leader, though a most excellent one, simply a teacher among teachers, His revelation such as any holy man might attain to, and His sacrifice no more than other sacrifices which devout and unselfish people are ever making.

Examination of the subject to be encouraged.

This does not mean, however, that the arguments brought against the Virgin-birth are of no moment, and that the opposition thereto is met by mere assertion. On the contrary, there is much in those arguments that must be reckoned with, and, since the destruction of this article of faith clears the way for the assault upon the Sinlessness of Christ and the Incarnation, its defence becomes inevitable. Even should we have reached a decision either way, and have come to regard any departure therefrom as unlikely, yet, so grave is the issue and so tremendous its consequences, patience and justice demand an examination as free and impartial as possible. If we have never made such, but have dropped as it were into our position in reference to the question, though we may be satisfied sufficiently for all devotional purposes, yet should we seek to ascertain intelligently the grounds of our belief. This point, at all events, both they who affirm and they who deny the Virgin-birth are agreed upon, viz. that it is not a matter of possibility, but of probability. No one denies that, if He saw fit, God could interfere with and

change any of the laws of nature; and in this instance He could have brought about the conception of His Son in a way extraordinary; but the question is, Did He do so? Much may be said to show why He should have brought it about in an exceptional manner, and the reasons alleged for such have much weight, especially if they agree with the drift of allusions and inferences in its favour, but neither suggestion nor hypothesis is equivalent to historical fact. We would enquire, therefore, not into the possibility of the Virgin-birth,—for the ordinary course of nature is every whit as wonderful as this extraordinary instance,—but into the evidence.

The earliest evidence outside the New Testament.

From the beginning the Church has taught that our Lord was born of a Virgin. "Hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary and her child-bearing," says St. Ignatius, writing to the Ephesians, not later than A.D. 107; and a little earlier in the same Epistle he writes: "Our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived in the womb by Mary according to a dispensation, of the seed of David, but also of the Holy Ghost." In the old Roman form of the Apostles' Creed, dated by Harnack from the second quarter of the second century, and by Kattenbusch from A.D. 100, appear the words "Born of the Virgin Mary"; and the same expression is found in Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, and other fathers of the early second century. Indeed, to quote Professor Harnack, "it is certain, that already in the middle of the second century, and probably soon after its beginning,

Harnack: *Hist. of Dogma*, i. 159; ii. 21; *Ency. Bib.*, iii. 3122; Orr's *Virgin Birth of Christ*, pp. 142–144.

Harnack's *Das apostol. Glaubensbekenntiss*, p. 24, quoted by Orr.

the birth of Jesus from the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary formed an established part of the Church tradition." Presumably the fact thus universally accepted had been known and admitted long before it obtained expression in credal form or controversial argument. Creeds do not invent or propound strange and unheard-of articles of faith, but, for the purposes of unity and the quieting of dispute, ascertain and state essential facts and doctrines as they have been commonly received, and have stood the test of examination. Nor do apologists defend their religion by statements as facts which their opponents may easily show to be fictions, and which their friends cannot support. Tradition must not only have time to grow, but also, to be of any value, must have some real and vital connexion with the past. We may assume, therefore, that a Creed such as the Roman set forth in the beginning of the second century did no more than gather into concise and definite form the truths which long since had come to be recognized as fundamental to Christianity.

A disputed reading in St. John may contain an allusion to the fact in question.

That this assumption is not unwarranted can be proved only by evidence drawn from the New Testament, for no earlier writings that refer to the subject than those just mentioned exist outside that book. The reading of St. John i. 13, "Who was born" (instead of "Which were born"), thereby referring the clause to Christ, and not to those who received Him, is supported by the early Fathers and the Latin versions,—*e.g.* Codex Veronensis, dating from the fourth or

fifth century. Irenæus read the passage in the singular: "Not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, was the Word made flesh";— "He who 'was not born either by the will of the flesh, or by the will of man,' is the Son of man, this is Christ, the Son of the living God." Tertullian, speaking of the Valentinians, held that the passage had been tampered by them, and denies that it was originally written in the plural. The argument that the singular reading would rule out a mother as well as a father is met by Tertullian's contention, given in this same chapter, that the reference is not to the nativity of our Lord, but to the act of generation. Christ was indeed *born* of flesh and blood, as were also they who received Him, but, unlike them, He was not so *begotten*. The verb used may be translated either "born" or "begotten," and both renderings are used in the Revised Version, the one in the text and the other in the margin. Naturally the singular form would follow the αὐτοῦ of the preceding verse; so that the whole passage should read: "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on the name of him [*i.e.* of Christ, the Son of God], who, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, was begotten." Nevertheless, though the plural form disturbs the construction, it appears in all the Greek manuscripts; and even Tertullian's charge against the Valentinians indicates that it was the reading of some manuscripts that were known

Adv. Hær., iii. 16, § 2; 19, § 2.

De Carne Domini, cap. xix.; written soon after A.D. 207.

See Zahn on this passage, quoted by Orr, *ut supra*, p. 271.

to him,—a reading which he can account for only by supposing a corruption of the text for dogmatic purposes. If it be said, that the charge of corruption may as easily be sustained against the singular reading, which, to secure an argument in favour of the Virgin-birth, may have been designed to displace the plural original, little more can be answered than that the original text was most likely written grammatically, and that the probability of a violation of the natural construction lies against the plural rather than against the singular. True, this may cut both ways; and the singular may have been intended as a correction. None of the uncials shows any trace of a difference of reading, so that whatever variation there may have been, it had been forgotten by the beginning of the fourth century, at least by the transcribers of these manuscripts; and the passage itself has long since received a spiritual interpretation,—that faith, whereby comes the power to receive Christ, is not a natural or an acquired ability, but a divine gift. To enter the kingdom of God, a man must have the birth from above. So that, on the whole, it may be fairly argued, that, were the hypothesis of the Virgin-birth dependent entirely on this verse, it would be unsafe to stake so important an issue on a probability so slight; on the other hand, if sufficient evidence of that hypothesis can be found elsewhere, the probability may be taken as rather in favour of Tertullian's contention than against it, and some satisfaction may be had in the supposition that

The tendency to adopt or to change readings to suit the argument was not always resisted even by the Fathers. Tertullian was a venturesome offender: see *Studia Biblia*, ii. 225; *Expositor*, Ser. I. Vol. xi. pp. 6-10.

in this verse there is an allusion to the supernatural generation of Christ.

It may not be assumed that St. John did not know of the Virgin-birth of his Lord.

The opinion is sometimes advanced that had St. John known of the Virgin-birth, he would have made some distinct mention of it. But if the Gospel and the Epistles that bear his name may be dated sometime between A.D. 80 and 110, the fact of the Virgin-birth could scarcely have escaped his attention. Should a later date be preferred, the writer of those documents certainly must have known it. He could not have been ignorant of a fact that was recognized by the Church as an article of faith. That he made no clear record of it is not surprising, for the reason that it may not have come within the purpose he had in mind; but had the hypothesis been novel or without foundation, it would have been passing strange, indeed practically inconceivable, if he had not combatted it. In the first Epistle, which is largely polemical, some forms of Docetic error are definitely condemned, for instance, that Christ had not come in the flesh; and the tradition recorded by Irenæus, on the authority of those who had heard it from Polycarp, may not be without foundation, that the Apostle refused to remain in the same building with Cerinthus,—against whom, and the like unbelievers, he is said to have written his Gospel. Cerinthus was of Egyptian origin and education, and seems to have endeavoured to fuse together tenets gathered from Jewish, Oriental, and Christian sources. Closely allied with his system, possibly part of it and indistinguishable from it,

Adv. Hær., lib. iii. cap. iii.

Iren. *Adv. Hær.*, lib. i. cap. xxvi.

were the teachings of the Ebionites or Judaizers, who held that Christianity had not abolished the law of Moses, and of the Nicolaitanes, who are so severely condemned in the Apocalypse,—all of them phases of that Gnosticism which St. Paul had occasion to rebuke in the Epistle to the Colossians and in the Pastoral Epistles, and which had grown into an active and dangerous opposition in the later years of St. John. The doctrines ascribed to these sects reached a higher development within the next fifty years, but some of their errors were sufficiently known, even as early as St. Paul's time, and still more plainly when St. John wrote. There was no hesitation on the part of these writers of the New Testament to meet teachings which they considered subversive of the truth. Whether St. John or someone else of his name wrote the Gospel or the Epistles which are ascribed to him, is for this argument of little consequence. The writer's characteristics are plain enough, and whatever falsehood or heresy stood in his way he readily denounced. Had the Virgin-birth been thought by him an error, he would have belied his character had he let it go unnoticed. To be sure, such denunciation may not have been necessary to his argument, but the early defenders of the faith did not hesitate to turn aside and give battle to anything that threatened to endanger that faith.

Col. ii. 8, 16, 18; 1 Tim. i. 6, 19; iv. 1; 2 Tim. ii. 18; ii. 1; Titus i. 10, 14; iii. 9.

Cerinthus may have considered the Virgin-birth

Irenæus says that Cerinthus represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the

ordinary course of human generation. Had the writer of the Gospel or the Epistles been aware of this utterance, it had been indeed matter of wonder that he had not denied such an assumption. In fact, if we may use the precarious argument from silence in one direction, it may reasonably be advanced in the other. Only, it is far from certain that Cerinthus ever formulated such an opinion, at least without some qualification, or so early as the writing of the Epistles. Had he done so, his denial of the Virgin-birth would have implied that there were some who affirmed it. But Irenæus, though a careful writer and a generous controversialist, is summing up everything that could be said against the doctrine of Cerinthus as it was known at the time of his writing, about A.D. 185 ; and by that time there were few errors more enormous and reprehensible than the denial of the Virgin-birth. Cerinthus himself may have done no more than deny that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh ; and in that case, parthenogenesis was not in question.

entirely outside the necessities of his teaching : but see Iren., *Adv. Hær.*, lib. i. cap. xxvi.

But admitting that the Virgin-birth is not explicitly stated either in the Gospel or in the Epistles of St. John, it can hardly be maintained that it was not implied and assumed by the exigences of St. John's theology. Had it not been taken as a fact, much of the purpose of the Gospel would have come to naught ; indeed, it may be safely said, that the Gospel would not have been written. We may dismiss, as utterly unsupported by the New Testament, the theory

The error is not to be tolerated, "that Jesus was He who was born of Mary, but that Christ was He who descended from above." Iren., *Adv. Hær.*, iii. xvi. 2.

propounded in the early ages by some Gnostics, that the name "Jesus" denotes a man who was conceived and born into the world naturally, and the title "Christ" signifies the Son of God who entered into the man, and for the time being enabled the man to perform divine acts. "They understand," says Irenæus, "that Christ was one and Jesus another; and they teach that there was not one Christ, but many." One of these Christs descended upon a man called Jesus at His baptism, and left Him before His passion. Thus Irenæus charged Cerinthus with teaching of Jesus, that "after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being." Such, perhaps, was a natural deduction from the principle held by the Gnostics generally, that matter being opposed to God had no real being, and was the source of all evil. "Jesus" represents that material world, "Christ," the heavenly; and by the coming of the latter into the former, evil is changed into good, and matter is exalted into the realm of thought. According to this doctrine, there was a Christ for every man capable of receiving Him, and the anointing which came to Jesus in His baptism goes on in other children of earth indefinitely. But this supposition, beautiful as it may seem, and susceptible as it may be of allegorical ex-

Ut supra, iii. xvii. 4.

Ut supra, i. xxvi. 1.

Harnack, *Hist. of Dogma*, i. 232.

This ancient heresy, exploded as was supposed long since, has found advocates in these latter days.

planation, contradicts the fact of the Incarnation of God, and makes a travesty of the Gospel. "We should not imagine that Jesus was one, and Christ another, but should know them to be one and the same." *Ut supra*, iii. xvi. 2.

Such curious and grotesque speculations, as was decisively shown at the time, could not be made to agree with the teaching of the New Testament; and in no particular was variance more evident than in this proposed separation of the name and title of our Blessed Lord. This notion ran directly counter to the statement in the Gospel, that the name Jesus was given at His birth to the Son of God, the Anointed of the Father. He was the Christ before the Incarnation; and in every sense the same person as Jesus who was born of Mary. The keynote of St. John's Gospel is the pre-existence of Him who received the name Jesus; and both by St. John and the other writers of the New Testament the name and title "Jesus Christ" are used together, to describe for all time and under all circumstances the one and the same Person. The name is not to be understood to indicate a man, and the title God or a spirit of God, for Deity has taken to Himself the nature of man, and in the Second Person of the Trinity manifests Himself for ever by that nature. Now, if He who was born of Mary existed before time began, it was not possible that He should be begotten in time, or that an earthly father could beget a divine and an eternally pre-existing son. That St. John believed our Blessed Lord to have had

St. John's Gospel affords ground for no such subtilties.

such pre-existence is evident: *e.g.* in the words of Christ to the Jews, who, in response to His declaration that if a man kept His saying, he should never see death, reminded Him that both Abraham and the prophets were dead, "Before Abraham was, I am." He does not say, "Before Abraham was, I was," but He speaks of Himself as having neither past nor future, neither beginning nor ending: the Being of the eternal present, even as God revealed Himself to Moses in the wilderness. Christ called Himself the Living Bread which came down from heaven; and when some wondered at this assertion of pre-existence, He asked, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" Other passages in the Gospel could be quoted to the same purpose.

John viii. 58.

John vi. 51, 62.

St. John had no occasion to deal directly with the Virgin-birth; nor had he occasion to describe the institution of the Lord's Supper; but from neither case may ignorance be deduced.

It may be said that while the eternal generation of the Son of God is shown by His pre-existence, yet the human nature which He took of the Virgin Mary required a progenitor. But it does not appear from the writings of St. John that this aspect of the question was so much as thought of. Attention is given exclusively to the personality of our Lord: the twofold nature is taken for granted, and is not dwelt upon or considered. Undoubtedly, as we know the laws of nature, a progenitor was required; but the effect could have been produced, if God so willed, in another way. As it was, the woman conceived and in due time brought forth her Son. But it is difficult to imagine how she could have departed from the laws of nature, and produced

a human being, without also producing that personality which ordinarily accompanies such, unless God had in some way intervened. The Evangelist passed by the question, in view of the greater truth he sought to establish. It does not fall in with his purpose to explain, or even to state, a circumstance which after all is only incidental to a sublime and fundamental truth. Jesus Christ was eternal, and had become man. In becoming man, He had taken flesh of a woman; with the manner, the Apostle is not immediately concerned. No earthly father is spoken of: but over and over again, in a sense that no other man ever claimed to be, the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as the Son of His Father who is in heaven. The context shows that St. John did not agree with those Jews who said, "Is not this Jesus, Joseph's son, whose father and mother we know?" John vi. 42.

The Synoptic Gospels were widely known before the Fourth Gospel was written.

But by the time the Gospel and the Epistles of St. John were written, the Synoptic Gospels had become known. There is not an iota of evidence to show that the parts of St. Matthew and St. Luke which record the Annunciation and the Nativity were a late addition. On this point we shall have more to say by and by. The probability is that they were in existence when St. John wrote, and were known to him. Had the statements they made concerning the Virgin-birth been strange, it is not too much to suppose that the Apostle would have contradicted them. But whether he knew of them or not, they stand on their own merits; and no man can

prove that they were added by a later hand, and were not written by the men who composed the rest of the Gospels. Supposed differences of style, and the assumption that the Virgin-birth was an afterthought, are not sufficient to disprove either their right to be regarded as parts of the original Gospels, or the truth of that which they affirm. As these Gospels have come down to us, they may be dated as having been written within the first fifteen years after the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. Probably the material of which they are composed was accumulated, and may have been set in some form, much earlier than this. But beyond dispute, they and the parts in question were in circulation before the last decade of the century, within ten or twenty years of the promulgation of the Roman form of the Apostles' Creed.

The testimony of St. Matthew and St. Luke not to be gainsaid.

In them the assertions of the Virgin-birth are plain and unequivocal. They are not forced or dragged into the narrative, but belong to its substance and texture. Nor is there any indication that the writers of those records did not know the force and meaning of the words they used, or that they were lacking in common sense. They may be supposed to have been intelligent enough to realize that such a phenomenon as the Virgin-birth was far from common and would occasion some surprise and criticism, —even in times which are supposed to have been more credulous than those in which we live. Yet they give no explanation of the event they chronicle, unless St. Matthew's reference

to an Isaianic prophecy be construed as such. St. Matthew plainly affirms the virginity of the woman betrothed to Joseph, and of her continuance in that state, certainly till after she had brought forth a Son. It should be observed, that the oldest codices, the Sinaitic and the Vatican, omit the appellation "first-born," which later manuscripts possibly took from Luke ii. 7. In the story of the Annunciation, St. Luke not only designates Mary as a virgin, but also represents her as interposing her virginity as a difficulty in the way of the fulfilment of the angel's message. The testimony of these Evangelists needs no interpretation; and the testimony can be disturbed only by ruling out of the text of Sacred Scripture the narratives of which it forms an integral part. So to rule, may be indeed a speedy way of getting rid of facts or doctrines difficult or unacceptable, but it is scarcely just or commendable. This, however, in the early part of the second century, is what Marcion did in his version of St. Luke; and that of obligation, for, according to his Docetic notions, Christ had no earthly body, and instead of being born, simply "came down from heaven."

The silence of St. Mark on the facts of the Conception and the Nativity is no evidence against either the supernatural or the natural generation or

St. Mark gives no information concerning the birth or childhood of our Lord; and yet it would be unwise to conclude that the Evangelist knew nothing of the Virgin-birth because he makes no mention of it. He had no occasion for doing so. His purpose concerns only the ministry of Christ, and therefore he begins

birth of Christ. If it be an argument, according to St. Mark Christ was not born at all.

his narrative with the preaching of John and our Lord's baptism. But he is no less emphatic than other writers of the New Testament in affirming the supernatural and divine character of Christ. He calls Him definitely the Son of God; describes the demons as acknowledging Him to be the Holy One of God, and the Son of the Most High God; and records the voice from heaven twice proclaiming Him to be the beloved Son. He ascribes powers to Him which could have been His only in consonance with a divine origin. That the people of His own country knew Him only as the carpenter was to have been expected. It has never been supposed that, before the power of Christ had been manifested in the Resurrection, the Virgin-birth had been blazoned abroad, and had become matter of common knowledge. Until the claims of Jesus had been vindicated, and the world had come to realize His dignity and mission, no heed would have been given to any story of the Virgin-birth. The people of Nazareth knew of no such story. To them Jesus was no more than the Son of Mary, or as He is sometimes called, "Joseph's son"; but by the time this Gospel was written, the supernatural birth had been widely accepted. The question asked by the Nazarenes, after His teaching in their synagogue which so astonished them, is given by St. Matthew: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" and by St. Mark: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" Which of the two readings is the older and the more

i. 1; i. 24; v. 7; i. 11; ix. 7.

Luke iv. 22; John vi. 42.

Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3.

exact, it would be difficult to decide. Most of the old Latin manuscripts and many of the Greek cursives correct St. Mark's text by St. Matthew's, and read "the carpenter's son." But this may have arisen from a dislike to think of Christ as working in the carpenter's shop,—a dislike occasioned somewhat by the fact that our Lord drew no illustration from the carpenter's trade, and made no reference to it in His parables or discourses. Nor is there any allusion thereto in the Epistles of the New Testament. He Himself may never have worked at that calling. On the other hand, in early days, and increasingly so as time went on, there were some who felt that such toil added dignity to Him who was the Friend of all toilers. "He was in the habit of working," says Justin Martyr, "as a carpenter when among men, making ploughs and yokes." The "apocryphal gospels" record several legends of His carpenter-life. It is not unlikely that St. Mark's reading either is older than St. Matthew's or is a correction of St. Matthew's, and that to avoid admitting the possible opinion that Jesus was the carpenter's son, he called Him "the carpenter, the son of Mary." If so, this reading would imply that St. Mark knew of the Virgin-birth, and that Joseph was not the father of Mary's son. The insignificance of Joseph is shown by the fact that in both Evangelists, Jesus is said to be the Son of Mary. This can hardly be explained by the supposition that at this time Joseph was dead. Unless the Blessed Virgin had been of

Dial. lxxxviii.

more consequence, at least socially, than Joseph, even though Joseph were dead, a matronymic would scarcely have been used.

St. Paul's knowledge of the Virgin-birth may be fairly inferred, though it cannot be directly proved. See *Passion of Christ*, p. 78.

There is no evidence that St. Paul, whose writings are the earliest in the New Testament, knew of the Virgin-birth, but the lack of such evidence is no proof of his lack of knowledge. The first preachers of the Gospel were so impressed by the Resurrection, and by the wonderful results of the proclamation of that fact in the lives of the people, that they made it the chief theme of their sermons and instructions. This was a present fact, of which some of them had personal cognizance, and it bore so immediately on the sorrows and doubts of life, that in its splendour and importance other truths concerning Christ, less immediate and less personal, would be naturally passed by. Time would be needed to make such truths known, and to bring out their value. We ought not, therefore, to expect that St. Paul should have made aught of the Virgin-birth. He never mentions the Blessed Virgin herself, but that is no proof that he had not heard of her, or that he did not believe she ever lived. He may not have troubled himself overmuch concerning the way by which God became incarnate. St. Paul knew that Jesus Christ was divine, that in His manhood dwelt the person of the Son of God ; but for the purpose he had in his ministry the proofs of those facts were to him of more consequence than the manner by which those facts came into being. And yet, as the Gospel reveals itself in the unfoldings of

time, we can scarcely avoid realizing that in his theology, as in that of St. John's, the Virgin-birth was a necessity. Even supposing that he did not realize it, or, if you will, that he did not know of it, the necessity is no less imperative. Without it, his theology would crumble away,—a structure without a foundation.

On the expression in St. Paul "Born of a woman": Gal. iv. 4.

The writings of St. Paul indeed afford no evidence of the Apostle's knowledge of the Virgin-birth, at least none that can be regarded as explicit and conclusive, but there are passages which may be reasonably taken to imply a doubt as to the value of the argument from silence. That he apprehended the Incarnation and the Sinlessness of Christ cannot be denied; more than these facts, however, seems to lie behind such an utterance as, "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law." The expression "Born of a woman" is used of John the Baptist: "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater": and it was uttered by Job: "Man that is born of a woman is short of days." It might be taken, therefore, as denoting simply human birth: God sent forth from Himself, His Son to become man. But it is significant that in this saying St. Paul changes the verb "born" from γεννητός to γενόμενος; though in this same chapter he uses the former word when speaking of Ishmael. The two words may mean practically the same thing, but they are not exact equivalents: the one signifying to beget or to be born, and the other to become; but whatever their correct definition,

Matt. xi. 11; Luke vii. 28.

Job xiv. 1.

Gal. iv. 23, 29.

that the Apostle when referring to our Lord as having been born of woman should substitute the term ordinarily used by the other, is at least not undeserving of notice. So in Romans i. 3, "His Son, who was born [*i.e.* came to be] of the seed of David according to the flesh"; and in St. John i. 14, "The Word became flesh." The passage as amended by St. Paul may not be considered sufficient even to suggest an allusion to the Virgin-birth, though some commentators, John Calvin among them, have declared such allusion evident; but St. Paul must have had some purpose in modifying a common saying when applying it to our Lord.

The tendency of the New Testament to be taken into account.

Excluding the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, it may be said that the evidence to the Virgin-birth from the other writers of the New Testament can be made even inferential only by assuming interpretations which suit the theory. But should these interpretations be at fault, or be too vague for practical purposes, yet they do correspond with the fact as it is unmistakeably set forth by two of the Evangelists, and incorporated in the earliest form of the Apostles' Creed. By themselves they would be of no appreciable use; but falling in with the belief which had certainly become common and authoritative by the beginning of the second century, and very much earlier had been recorded in the Gospels, we may at least claim that the drift of the Apostolic teaching would be in favour of the fact, and that the passages in question are more likely to harmonize therewith, than to be adverse.

At all events, even should this argument be set aside, the fact it is intended, not to establish, but in some degree to support, may not be denied because it was unique and contrary to experience. We repeat, that the Virgin-birth cannot be disproved on the ground of impossibility.

Of the assertion that the Virgin-birth is not essential to Christianity.

It is contended, however, that the Virgin-birth is not necessary to Christianity. The Incarnation could have been accomplished without it. In the effort to discard the supernatural element of Christianity, this fact, which is thought to be the weakest in point of evidence of all the articles of faith, is treated as of least consequence. Even when this conclusion is not deliberately and openly proclaimed, some people, influenced by the assaults made upon the fact, and taking it for granted that the weight of modern scholarship is against it, leave it as an open question, ignore it, and rest satisfied that without it there is enough in the Gospels to satisfy the spiritual needs of man. But, apart from all other considerations, it does not appear safe to set aside an article of faith which through all the ages the Church has maintained so unanimously and so emphatically. The presumption is that she has desired only to support truth. Had it been a matter of choice, she need not have adopted the hypothesis of the Virgin-birth. It would have been easier, perhaps, to have taken the theory of natural generation: certainly that would have avoided all suggestion of the supernatural. But at the risk of being misunderstood, and of being contradicted, she was constrained

to declare that the conception of Christ was not of man, but of God. For it should be marked, that after all the difficulty does not lie in the formula, "Born of the Virgin Mary," but in the preceding article, "Conceived by the Holy Ghost"; or as the Nicene Creed has it, "Was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary." The stress really lies on that divine and preternatural conception. Obviously we cannot deal with this question in the clear and outspoken manner of the fathers, but they who desire to enter into the particulars involved in this doctrine may find such, for instance, in the pages of Irenæus and Tertullian. The point we would insist upon is this: that the teaching of eighteen centuries ought not to be set aside as untrue or of no consequence at the dictation of scholars, who themselves are professedly against all that seems to them to be miraculous or above nature. Why should not the coming into the world of the Son of God be such? And why should the Church of God, on a bare supposition, be imagined to have erred these many hundreds of years? Perhaps it may be found that she was not in the wrong. Certainly in those far-away years when she made this fact an article of her Creed, and accepted the authority of the Evangelists on the subject, she must have known what she was doing, and unless she was recreant to her trust and mission she must have examined the evidence upon which she made so momentous a decision. Nor is it just to suppose that since such decision, the Church has held thereto ignor-

antly or obstinately against all argument to the contrary. The learning of the world, to say nothing of the guidance of the Holy Ghost, has been at her disposal; and in every school or sect of the Catholic Church there have been men of undoubted scholarship, sterling integrity, simple piety, and readiness to sacrifice themselves for the truth's sake, who have reiterated, propagated, and defended the fact now before us. This ought in some degree to be looked upon as a reason why the Virgin-birth should not be thought unnecessary or unimportant, and why it should neither be ignored nor declared alien to Christianity. Perhaps, it might be argued that the very zeal and energy with which it is attacked, the anger and bitterness its opponents not infrequently display, provide some evidence that it is not taken to be of no consequence.

The invention of Celsus to hinder faith in the Virgin-birth.

The Gnostic sects could afford to deny without enquiry the possibility of the Virgin-birth, and the evidence in its favour. In their system it could have no place. But the pagan was not indisposed to legends and myths in which parthenogenesis had part. His opposition ran on other lines. In the latter part of the second century, that learned and doughty antagonist to Christianity, Celsus, dealt with the question on its own merits. He dismisses it, not because it is incongruous with any theory or scheme which he has adopted, for to him as a traveller, scholar, and philosopher the strangeness of the alleged fact had no perplexity, but because of

Passion of Christ, p. 114.

his antipathy for a religion which not only was novel, but also threatened to subvert principles he thought necessary to the strength and comfort of the Empire. He did not believe that anything good or true could be evolved in a system so violently and uncompromisingly inimical to most things out of itself. Every evil might be expected of visionaries who set Christ against Cæsar. Under the circumstances, critical and judicious he could not be, but to be sarcastic, inventive, and unscrupulous was not difficult. One regrets this the more because, in spite of Origen's superior knowledge and skill, and the ease with which he demolishes his arguments, perhaps for the very abuse with which Origen treats him, one has a kindly feeling for the anxious, impetuous, and yet accomplished pagan. He was earnest in his purpose, even though the means he used were far from honest. The importance he attached to the Virgin-birth as an article of faith is shown by his denunciation of it. Had it not been esteemed a fundamental truth, undoubtedly he would have passed it by. As it was, it irritated him to the farthest edge of his wrath. Against it he brought a story in which he represents a Jew as holding discourse with our Lord. First, this supposititious Jew accuses Christ of having "invented his birth from a virgin"; and then he upbraids Him with being "born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her subsistence by spinning, and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by

Origen, *Contra Celsum*, lib. i. caps. xxviii., xxxii.

trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child, who having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God." Elsewhere Celsus's Jew declares of Mary, that "when she was pregnant she was turned out of doors by the carpenter to whom she had been betrothed, as having been guilty of adultery, and that she bore a child to a certain soldier named Panthera." With this story, and with some ribald and jocular remarks thereon, Celsus imagined that he had torn to pieces and completely disposed of "the fiction of our Lord's birth from a virgin."

Traces of this story appear in Talmudic literature; but as its earliest appearance in that literature occurs in the Babylonian Talmud, not earlier than the beginning of the fourth century, being therefore a report of what was said in Babylonia, and not in Palestine, it is evident that Origen has preserved the oldest record of the tradition. The record, however, affords no evidence of date, and the tradition may have been current long before Celsus heard of it. Indeed, its origin has been ascribed to Rabbi Eliezer ben Horquenos, a well-known teacher in the latter part of the first century, born near

The sources of the story: for these particulars see Herford's *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash.* See also Moffat's *Intro. to Literature of N. T.*, pp. 211, 251, 259, 586.

Herford, pp. 351, 2.

A.D. 40, and a disciple of Rabbi Johanan ben Zaccai. This Johanan, who spent his life mainly in Jerusalem, died an old man before A.D. 80, and may have seen and heard Jesus. Rabbi Eliezer seems to have known more of Christ and of Christianity than his contemporaries or immediate successors. About A.D. 109 he was arrested and tried, probably at Cæsarea, on the charge of being a Min, a Jewish name for a heretic or Christian. His disciple Rabbi Aquiba said to him, when he was grieving for the cause of his arrest: "Rabbi, shall I say to thee why thou art perhaps grieving?" He went on to suggest, "Perhaps one of the Minim has said to thee a word of Minuth, and it has pleased thee." And Eliezer replied, "By heaven, thou hast reminded me! Once I was walking along the street of Sepphoris, and I met Jacob of Chephar Sichnin, and he said to me a word of Minuth in the name of Jeshu ben Pantiri, and it pleased me." In another place, Eliezer is recorded as saying, "I found a man, one of the disciples of Jeshu ha-Nôtzri," *i.e.* the Nazarene. But Eliezer's knowledge was of hearsay, rather than of experience; and in this particular legend he simply repeats a conclusion reached by his co-religionists as soon as the story of the Virgin-birth of Christ became known. The legend was expanded in a work bearing the title of *Tol'doth Jeshu*, the earliest form of which dates from the ninth century, and the form in which it is now known from the thirteenth century. Critics describe the book, which consists of some

A summary is given in Hastings' *Dict. of Chr. and the Gospels*, ii. 879.

twenty-four pages, as a rather stupid and silly tale intended to tickle the ears of ignorant Jews. It was not written for Christians, but it made the old tradition still more offensive: "Josephus Pandera, the Roman officer of a Calabrian legion which was in Judæa, seduced Miriam of Bethlehem, and was the father of Jesus."

The other side of the story.

The story in this development needs no consideration. No reputable authority, Jewish or Christian, would agree with Voltaire in ascribing the *Tol'doth Jeshu* to the first century,—which he does for the sake of this wretched story. And yet there are modern opponents of Christianity, though they profess to have the honesty and acumen necessary for the historian, who do not hesitate to reproduce as fact one of the most unjustifiable fictions ever invented. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the tradition from which it sprang was in existence before the close of the first century. Origen does not seem surprised that Celsus repeated it, and probably knew of it independently of Celsus. But it is certain that the Rabbis based their assertions concerning it on rumour, and not on deductions drawn from the Christian Gospels. Nor did the Rabbis intend their utterances or opinions to reach Christians,—certainly not Gentile Christians, for, as far as we can see, Judaism cared not what the Gentiles did in reference to the "new religion"; though bitterness long prevailed against such Jews as seceded from the faith of the fathers. The Talmudic literature was for the benefit only of Jews who accepted

the instruction of the Rabbis. What was said in these schools about Christian dogma, as that dogma became known to the masters, probably seldom reached the ears of Christian teachers; and the judgements passed upon them affected none but those who heard them. Refutation was impossible, not simply for want of opportunity, but for lack of knowledge of what had been said. Had this tradition been widespread, long before Origen's time Christian apologists would have been obliged to meet it. Christianity could have done nothing, with such an aspersion upon its Founder.

The story admits too much.

Nor does the faintest shadow of suspicion appear in the Gospels, that either our Lord or His followers or His enemies knew or supposed that He was born out of wedlock; or that Mary was other than a pure woman. The Jews who declared to Jesus, "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God," did not thereby imply any scandal concerning Him. Had such a scandal at that time existed, it would have been brought out in the Trial,—indeed, it may be doubted if there would have been a trial, for no followers would have been won to a man whose parentage was in doubt. Moreover, to come to the generation in which the story was fabricated, if the story rested on contemporary evidence, that is to say, if it arose from reports current in the early part of the first century, it would prove too much,—certainly for the adversaries of the Virgin-birth, and for those who deny the historicity of Jesus

John viii. 41.

"Had the birth of Jesus been illegitimate, as later on the opponents of Christianity actually hinted, his personal enemies in Galilee, especially at Nazareth, where he was less admired and loved than elsewhere, would not have failed to have reproached

Christ. It would show that in the generation when our Lord was on earth, the question of His birth and that of His paternity were already under discussion. This is more than the most headstrong apologist for Christianity would attempt to prove. Nor have we any intimation why the charge of paternity was not brought against Joseph, unless this may be taken, not as a concession to Christianity, but as an additional reproach. Curiously enough, the Jews do not seem ever to have made any attempt to show that our Lord was the Son of Joseph. That would have weakened the sting of the opposition. Origen, however, had no difficulty either in proving that the Jew invented by Celsus for the purposes of his narrative was not familiar with Jewish literature, or in showing that Celsus had no trustworthy information of Christ outside the four Gospels. The name Panthera given by Celsus to the soldier may have been corrupted from Ben-Pandira, also written Pandera, Pantira, and Pantiri, one of the names given to our Lord in the Talmud; and the Talmudic name may have been derived from Ben-Parthena, the Virgin's Son. Herford points out that while the earliest Jewish tradition knows Jesus as Ben-Pandira, the explanation that Pandira was the father of Jesus was not given till the third century; and that originally Ben-Pandira, rather than a name, was a descriptive epithet, as Boanerges, "sons of thunder," applied to James and John.

him with it, and we should find some slight traces of the fact even in the pages of his own historians."—A. Réville. *Histoire du dogma de divinité de J. C.*, p. 27.

p. 358.

In some measure, this story will serve to

The story of Panthera absolutely without foundation.

suggest the desperate straits the pagan was driven to, and the hopeless struggle the Jew undertook, in the effort to destroy the faith of Christendom in the Virgin-birth. Opposition is weak and forlorn indeed, when it finds itself resorting to the fabrication of slanderous and unclean legends. So far as the Jew was concerned, he had an unmeasured contempt for One who he believed had led astray and deceived Israel, who had sinned Himself and caused the multitude to sin, who had mocked at the words of the wise, and who, tainted with heresy, suspected of magical arts, and a revolutionary, had been excommunicated and put to death. This contempt enabled the Jew to listen to any calumny that might be brought forward against the Nazarene. It needed no examination: He was far enough from the truth as to be deserving of anything that could be said against Him. Undoubtedly times have changed, and, especially since Christian people have learned to respect the Jew, rather than to malign and persecute him, Hebrew scholars have come to hesitate at these rabbinical traditions, even to doubt their reference to Christ at all, and to repudiate with scorn such a figment as the *Tol'doth Jeshu*. But neither Origen nor the later fathers thought so much of the Jew, as of the pagan who searched out the rumours against Christ popular among the Jews; which rumours probably were as unknown to Christians as the Christian traditions were unknown to Jews. The battle was already lost when Celsus took up his pen. Truth has

Herford, *ut supra*, p. 348.

nothing to fear when such an obvious hoax as this is the worst the adversary can devise. Haeckel will have to produce better evidence for his assumption of the genuineness of this story, and a safer scholarship, than he has shown in his *Die Welträthsel.* The silence of Josephus may not mean much ; but he was a Jew, biassed and well informed, and wrote nearly a hundred years earlier than Celsus. The passages in the *Antiquities* in which mention is made of Christ, of John the Baptist, and of James the Just, are probably interpolations,—perhaps further amended by some Christian hand,—and yet the substance of two of them at least was part of the text in Origen's time ; and had Josephus known this story it is next to certain he would have used it to the damage of Christianity.

On this subject, see Loof's *Anti-Haeckel*, *e.g.* p. 44.

Bk. xviii. Chap. iii. § 3; v. § 2; Bk. xx. Chap. ix. § 1.

Contra Celsum, I. xlvii.

They who dispute the Virgin-birth sometimes allege that the theory came into the Church from paganism. They point to myths and legends common among the peoples from whom in those early days Christianity received many converts. "The idea that the Holy Spirit begat Jesus," Soltau declares, "can have no other than a Hellenic origin"; and Schmiedel says, "The origin of the idea of a Virgin-birth is to be sought for in Gentile Christian circles." But this is the very supposition that fathers such as Justin Martyr, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian repudiated. They did indeed wonder that the pagan should stumble at this

The doctrine sometimes said to have been adopted by Christianity from Paganism.

Geburtsgeschichte, p. 48.

Ency. Bib., iii. 2964.

Orr, *ut supra*, p. 166. He draws atten-

tion to the utter absence of the historical element in these heathen myths. Their incredible vileness forbids further comment.

article of Christian belief, when their own mythology was full of stories of births from gods and goddesses. Harnack, who does not accept the fact of the Virgin-birth, declares "that the idea of the birth from a Virgin is a heathen myth which was received by the Christians, contradicts the entire earliest development of Christian tradition which is free from heathen myths." Elsewhere he says, "The unreasonable method of collecting from the mythology of all peoples parallels for original Church traditions, whether historical reports or legends, is valueless"; and again, "The Greek or Oriental mythology, I should leave entirely out of account; for there is no occasion to suppose that the Gentile congregations in the time up to the middle of the second century adopted, despite of their fixed principle, popular mythical representations." Notwithstanding this judgement of an undoubted scholar and historian, not only does Usener state that "the efforts which have been made to disprove the unwelcome intrusion of heathen mythology into the substance of the Gospels have been ineffectual," but there are also learned folk-lorists, who insist on deducing a parallel and a suggestion from legends, say, of Perseus, Hermes, and Heracles. Such authorities have no reluctance in disparaging the authority of the Gospels, questioning the genuineness of the Ignatian Epistles, casting contempt on the testimony on which the Virgin-birth is built, and supposing that Christianity is a deliberate and calculated invention of men,

Hist. of Dogma, i. 100.

Quoted by Orr, *ut supra*, p. 176.

Ency. Bib., iii. 3351.

who, we should observe, in its propagation and defence had everything to lose and nothing in this world to gain. Apparently they find little difficulty in accepting, and no hesitation in interpreting polemically, legends which they opine tell against the supernatural birth of Christ. Whatever truth there may be in pagan or heathen myths or customs, they are satisfied there is none in Christian parthenogenesis. They will cite in confirmation of their preconceived ideas, every whimsical fancy or custom, every oddity, that they light upon or that can be thought of, when as a matter of fact such illustrations may be really exceptional, and no evidence whatever of custom, tradition, or doctrine. But, while there is much assertion and repetition to the contrary, there is no evidence to show that Christianity had to any appreciable extent come into such contact and sympathy with the pagan world before the Virgin-birth became an article of faith, as to take any notion of the kind therefrom. Throughout the first two centuries Christianity contended fiercely against both Judaism and paganism, and looked with suspicion upon even the truths which those systems contained. Besides, if the Virgin-birth were not historically true, there was nothing attractive or helpful in the romances of the loves of pagan gods to invite adoption. They were sensual and repulsive, and utterly at variance with that purity of life which beyond question the Church had from the beginning insisted upon; in which Judaism was scarcely less

See, *e.g.*, Hartland's *Legend of Perseus*, iii. 188.

On analogies to the Virgin-birth, see Justin Martyr, *Apol.* I. caps. xxi.–xxiii., xlvi.

urgent. The tendency to find a supernatural origin for a hero, had no encouragement among a people who knew full well the power of the present and living Christ, and who repudiated the whole system of pagan philosophy. The attitude of the early Christians was that of uncompromising hostility to such. Many of them were ignorant of the inner meaning of the rites and mysteries of their heathen neighbours. All that they saw was vileness, superstition, falsehood. They may have been severe in their judgement, possibly unjust, but they were in no disposition to imitate or adopt any features or traits of a religion which they altogether condemned, and in which they firmly believed there was no salvation. Wherever the idea of the Virgin-birth came from, it did not come into the Church from paganism. "It is unnecessary," says Lobstein, who does not believe in the Virgin-birth, "to resort to the hypothesis of pagan influences or of Hellenic or Oriental factors in order to explain the origin of the belief in the supernatural birth of Christ." As to Máyá, mother of Gautama, the most ancient traditions regard her as a married woman, while of Devaki, mother of Krishna, one of the incarnations of Vishnu, the earliest records are several hundred years later than the Gospels; so that neither can be considered as having had any influence on Christian doctrine.

Lobstein, *Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 75.

Others claim to have discovered the idea in Judaism; and the Fathers laid great stress on

passages in the Hebrew writers which seemed to foretell that the Messiah should have an extraordinary birth. Both Irenæus and Origen devote much attention to the declaration of St. Matthew: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us." The prophecy referred to is in Isaiah vii. 14, and in the R.V. reads: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The application of this passage to the Messiah has been denied by Hebrew scholars, and disputed by Christian scholars; but for many centuries the latter agreed with St. Matthew,—both Harnack and Lobstein still think that the belief in the Virgin-birth sprang from this prophecy, — and if there be reason why their judgement should be disputed, as we think probable, it may be well to ascertain the meaning of the passage which justifies such dispute.

The question of the reference of Isa. vii. 14 to the Virgin-birth.

Matt. i. 22, 23.

Harnack's *Hist. of Dogma*, i. 100; Lobstein, *ut supra*, p. 73.

The seventh and two following chapters of Isaiah may be taken as a whole, seeing that they deal with the troublous times of Ahaz, when Israel feared the alliance of Damascus with Assyria. That aggressive power, then, about 734 B.C., nearing the height of its domination, had laid a heavy hand on the northern kingdom, and the tribute demanded created much discontent. The king, Pekahiah, acquiesced in the settlement which his father Menahem had made,

A sketch of the occasion which gave rise to the utterance of Isaiah.

practically acknowledging himself as under the suzerainty of Assyria, and as holding his kingdom by the favour of the Assyrian monarch; but after two years he was assassinated by one of his officers, Pekah, who with the aid of fifty other soldiers, probably tribesmen of his own, headed a rebellion, secured the throne, repudiated the foreign obligation, and endeavoured to guard Israel against the threatening and sure vengeance of Assyria. Pekah's policy led him to form an alliance in which all the kingdoms of Syria would unite against the common foe. Rezin, king of Damascus, joined him in an effort to induce Judah to come into the coalition. On the refusal of Ahaz, king of Judah, the allies, to whom the adherence of Judah to their league was of vital importance, began a war which had for its object the deposition of Ahaz, and the placing on the throne of one Ben-Tabeal, probably a Syrian soldier of low origin, who would serve their purpose.

The weakness of Ahaz. *Cf.* 2 Kings xvi.

The war went sore against Ahaz. Weak and cowardly, he shut himself up in Jerusalem, refusing to take the field against the invaders of his kingdom. They wrought much havock: putting to the sword many thousands of valiant men, and taking a great multitude of them captive to Damascus. Among other injuries, they dealt a serious blow at Judæan trade by taking the port of Elath in the Gulf of Akabah, and handing it over to the Edomites. So imminent appeared the fall of Jerusalem, that consternation possessed its inhabitants. Ahaz was a polytheist, and while

observing the rites and doctrines of Jahvehism had endeavoured to incorporate with them such foreign ceremonies and beliefs as commended themselves to his tastes. It was probably at this time of distress that he sacrificed his son as a burnt offering to Jahveh. Both he and his nobles lost judgement and courage:—"his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind."

Isaiah endeavours to strengthen the king.

Isaiah the prophet was the only man who remained calm amidst the peril. He and his son met the king and his nobles as they were surveying the fortifications of Jerusalem, and he bade him, "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not," said he, "neither be faint hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands." Especially was Isaiah opposed to any appeal to Assyria on behalf of Judah against the allies. Such an appeal was already determined upon by the king: and so fearful seemed the conditions that at last Ahaz sent to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, the message, "I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me." The message was accompanied by a present of the silver and gold which was found in the Temple and the palace treasuries,—partly as a pledge of good faith, and partly to defray the cost of the expedition. Isaiah protested, probably foreseeing that, without any thought of Judah, Assyria would come to the suppression of the confederation against the empire, and to the recovery of the tributary

kingdoms ; and further, that an alliance between a small province such as Judah and a powerful and ambitious power such as Assyria, could end only in the subjugation of the one to the other.

The Assyrians suppress the League.

Ahaz thought himself secure in that he could say to the allies, "Assyria is with us" ; and, so far as men saw at the time, his policy had results which were immediately beneficial, but which in the end, as Isaiah foresaw and warned him, were fatal to Judah's peace and independence. After the fall of Damascus, the Assyrians invaded Israel, and sent many of the people into captivity. Samaria, alarmed at the approach of the enemy, put Pekah to death, and allowed Hoshea, probably from the first a creature of the king of Assyria, to occupy the throne. This delayed the destruction of the city for a few years. Rezin, too, was slain in battle ; and Ahaz went to Damascus to pay his respects, if not his homage, to Tiglath-pileser.

Isaiah gives the king and his lords a divine pledge of the truth of his mission.

So confident was Isaiah that Jerusalem would escape the destruction threatened by the allies, without the help of Assyria, that, as a pledge or assurance, a token of the truth of his message, on the occasion of his meeting Ahaz, he offered the king any sign from God that he might demand : "ask it either in the depth, or in the height above,"—out of the realm of the Underworld, or from the heaven of the Divine presence. The king refused, evidently treating the proposition as worthless, and fearing to try Jahveh. The prophet appealed from the king to the courtiers and officers who were with

him: "Hear ye now, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken."

No Messianic prophecy appears in the sign given by the prophet.

It is difficult to discover any reason under these circumstances for a reference to the Messiah, even if, at so early a date, the Messianic idea had come to Israel. The prophet's purpose was to prove that within a certain time, namely, some time between the conception and the weaning of the child which the virgin or young woman should bear, the alliance would be broken up, and Judah would be freed from the fear of the Syrian and Samaritan federation. "Before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken." The same assurance is given in the prophecy concerning the son born unto the prophet: "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz, *i.e.* Swift-prey, Speedy-spoil, or, the Spoil speedeth, the Prey hasteth; and a similar averment to that given in the former prophecy follows: "For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before

The text may be read in the present: "Behold the virgin is with child, and beareth a son."

Isa. viii. 3, 4.

the king of Assyria." It does not appear in the former prophecy to what virgin or marriageable young woman the prophet referred. Possibly the king's bride, Abijah, daughter of Zechariah, was in the prophet's mind, and, if so, the prince that should be born of her may have been Hezekiah. The chronology is confused, but Hezekiah ascended the throne on the death of Ahaz, in 714 B.C. In the account given in Kings and in Chronicles, he is said to have been at that time five and twenty years of age, which would set his birth in 739 B.C.; but the question of five years in these dates or in his reputed age may not be decided accurately. The birth may have been in 734 B.C., about the time that the allied kings threatened Jerusalem. As a matter of fact Damascus fell in 732 B.C., within two years of the revolt of Syria and Israel,—the time between the conception and the weaning of a child. Were this so, the jubilant song of praise over the birth of the son might well be taken to refer to Hezekiah, who became one of the most popular and most famous of the kings of Judah. Long afterwards he was regarded as the ideal king; and possibly some writer later than Isaiah added to the words of the prophet the panegyric of this prince: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be

Isa. ix. 6–8.

no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgement and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this."

Hezekiah was an ideal king, and yet this description may be made more closely to apply to Christ.

The names or titles given in this laudation were not uncommonly attributed to kings and rulers, who in those times and in those lands were regarded as gods and fathers to their people. Hezekiah was such to Judah. "In every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered"; and when, after a glorious reign of nine and twenty years, he was gathered to his fathers, "they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death." And yet it should be remembered, that very early the Church thought of the description of the son that had been born as applicable to Christ: more so than it could have been to Hezekiah. Hence the use of this passage in the services for Christmas Day. This, however, need not mean that the prophet thought of his words as pertinent to the Messiah. His vision may have been bounded by the circumstances of his own age; and the coming of a prince who should be to Judah what Ahaz never had been, led him to express his hope in a description of a faithful and godlike king. He spoke more wisely than he knew; and when the King did come who corresponded more nearly than any other king

2 Chron. xxxi. 21; xxxii. 33.

had done to the ideals of the prophets, his words were given another application.

"Nothing can be more preposterous than to imagine that the prophet intended by the young woman a wife of the king's, or even his own." —Ewald, *Prophets of the Old Testament*, ii. p. 91.

But while it is possible that Hezekiah was referred to in the prophecy concerning the virgin's son, it is also possible, and some may think more probable, that Isaiah had no particular woman in mind, but spoke of woman in the abstract: "Marry a maiden, and before her child is weaned, Damascus and Samaria will be defeated." In neither case does the meaning of the word "virgin" become of consequence. The stress of the prophecy does not lie on that term. So far as Isaiah is concerned, it may stand for maid or for young woman. He is not thinking of an extraordinary or supernatural conception, but of the time within which Judah will be relieved from the fear of Syria and Israel. Take any bride in the country: when her babe is born, she will not call him, as Ahaz would call him, "Assyria is with us," but "God is with us." The child represents prosperity, and prosperity is a gift from Jahveh and not from Assyria. Every child born in Judah is a token that God will save and protect His people. The whole context suggests that the sign intended did not consist in anything miraculous in the birth itself, but in the speedy coming of the event, and in the symbolical name to be given to the child.

Hastings' *Bib. Dict.*, iv. 871.

The singularity of the illustration, however, led to its interpretation as a prophecy of a unique event.

But as time went on, the expression, "A virgin shall conceive," was separated from the context, and was made to stand out boldly by itself. The Hebrew word 'Almah here used means a damsel

of marriageable age, a youthful spouse recently married, rather than a maid of unspotted virginity. Had the prophet intended the latter, some authorities think he would have used the word B'thulah; but it should be observed that though this word is used without qualification, *e.g.* 2 Sam. xiii. 2, 18; Judges xix. 24, yet when particular stress is desired some explanatory clause is added, *e.g.* Gen. xxiv. 16, and Judges xxi. 12; and in Joel i. 8, it is used positively of a woman newly married. So that it is not altogether certain that the word which it is suggested the prophet should have used, comes any nearer the idea of what we understand by the word "virgin" than the word he did use. The Septuagint translates 'almah in Psalm lxviii. 25 by *νεᾶνις* and in Isa. vii. 14 by *παρθένος*. Later translators, Aquila of Pontus, about A.D. 130, and Theodotion the Ephesian, about A.D. 180, evidently to avoid the then usual interpretation of *παρθένος*, adopted the term *νεᾶνις*, meaning simply "young woman": for which Irenæus censured them. The *παρθένος* of the Septuagint, like the *virgo* of the Vulgate, may be interpreted generally "girl" or "young woman," and need not be taken to mean absolutely "virgo intacta"; and it is possible that the LXX, following the context, and therefore considering the sign to lie in the speedy fulfilment of the assurance of freedom, discovered no emphasis on the word they used. They may have understood the term in its restricted sense, but scarcely that a maid should conceive without intercourse. Much learning

Con. Hær., III. xxi. 1.

Cheyne on *Isaiah*, I. 47.

has been devoted to this question, and "as to the details of the interpretation, opinions are and always will be divided"; but there does not appear to be any evidence that the Jewish prophets or rabbis used the word in reference to the mother of the Messiah, and it is possible that St. Matthew may have quoted the passage, not as a prophecy, but as an illustration, perhaps as an evidence, of the historical event he was describing. "It is not so strange as you think, for recall the words of Isaiah, 'A virgin shall conceive.'" The Fathers, indeed, discerned in the expression a prophecy, and so there may have been, and that of the Messiah,—"This, then," says Justin Martyr, "'Behold, a virgin shall conceive,' signifies that a virgin should conceive without intercourse. For if she had had intercourse with any one whatever, she was no longer a virgin; but the power of God having come upon the virgin, overshadowed her, and caused her while yet a virgin to conceive." But it does not necessarily follow that their interpretation should be set against the fact that, notwithstanding their knowledge of the passage and their use of the Septuagint, no Jewish authority had thought of the Messiah as being supernaturally conceived. Nor may we suppose that Christian teachers, finding the passage, and, contrary to precedent, suspecting in it a prophecy, deliberately prepared a fiction to suit the emergency. It is preposterous to conclude that because of an utterance, torn entirely from its occasion and its context, and originally meaning

The First Apology, xxxiii.; *ante* A.D. 165.

nothing of the sort, the birth of the Messiah should be made so extraordinary. The event having occurred, it was natural to use the saying to soften the exceptional nature of the event; but, notwithstanding the force of the ἵνα, we do not see how the words of St. Matthew can be taken in a literal sense,—"this was done *that* [=in order that, or for the purpose that,] it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet." The Evangelical writers fitted their conception of events and persons to Old Testament utterances, as, for instance, here St. Matthew believed that Christ was born of a virgin-mother, *ergo*, this passage in Isaiah applied to Him: the fact of the birth remains, but the *ergo* does not follow.

Prayer before the Passion, pp. 118–120.

Indeed, though the hope of the Messiah was prominent in Hebrew thought for some centuries before the coming of Christ, and became more intense as the time of that coming drew near, it does not seem that Hebrew prophecy or theology concerned itself with the question of the manner of the Messiah's birth. It was easy enough to read the facts back into the prophecies; but that the prophecies had anything to do with the facts is beyond the possibility of discovery. And this leads us to conclude that the idea of the Virgin-birth had no more connexion with Jewish teaching than it had with Pagan mythology. It did not happen because either Greek traditions told of such or because Jewish leaders prophesied of such, but simply and solely because it was a fact complete and unique in itself. No suggestion

The saying of Isaiah had no influence whatever on the story of the event.

came from without that such should be fitted into Christian faith. It had nothing whatever to do with Hebrew or Greek opinion or tradition. Christ was born of a Virgin ; and He was born independently of either theory or prophecy. It might as well be argued that Magna Carta was devised and made law, because some ancient Greek states had struggled for freedom, and some utterance of Plato had been construed to foretell that a people as yet unthought of should in a supreme act make possible a civilization happier than the world had ever known. It is of no consequence whence came the ideas which moved the prelates and barons of England to defend their national rights. The fact stands out by itself. And irrespective of Jew or Greek, Christ came into the world, as the Church realized He came, "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary." The fact is fact for no other reason than that it really happened.

Christianity is an evolution in an eternal plan, and Christ begins His prepara-, tion for the redemption of man in the ages before His nativity.

We pass on from the mysteries and difficulties involved in the questions of the eternal existence of the Son of God, in His determination to become man, and in His incarnation, sinlessness, and virgin-birth, to consider the documents which have preserved the knowledge of the events connected with His birth and childhood. These events, or the person and mission of Jesus Christ, cannot be adequately apprehended, unless the fundamental truths with which we have been dealing are kept in mind.

If He be no more than man, at the utmost excellent only for His human virtues, there is no more in the Gospel story than there is in the story of Gautama ; and Christianity, rather than being a religion dealing with things eternal, infinite, and divine, is nothing better than an ethical philosophy.

The Sources of our knowledge of the Coming of Christ.

The narratives of the Infancy and Childhood of Christ given in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke are independent of each other ; and no similar narrative appears in St. Mark. St. Mark, indeed, begins with the preaching of John the Baptist, and the baptism and temptation of Christ ; so, in each case, after the first two chapters do St. Matthew and St. Luke. Nevertheless, there is no manuscript of the Gospels, nor is there any intimation known that such manuscript ever existed, in which either of the two narratives or prologues is omitted. Their development is unknown ; nor does it seem that they came either immediately or remotely from the same source. Much of the material in St. Luke, in the first instance, must have been imparted by the Blessed Virgin herself, though it may have passed through other narrators, and have become a definite and well-shaped tradition, before it reached St. Luke. The poetical charm and true Israelitish spirit in the narrative portions and in the inserted psalms, comparable only to the finest parts of the books of Samuel, could not have come from a Greek like St. Luke. Twice he points out that Mary kept in memory and pondered significant sayings associated with

Zahn's *Introduction to the New Testament*, iii. 112 *sq.*

the childhood and youth of her Son, thus indicating that these traditions were transmitted through her. In like manner, the circumstances given in St. Matthew, originally and for the most part could have been known only to Joseph ; though, again, the story probably passed through others, likewise becoming a definite and well-shaped tradition before it reached the writer of St. Matthew's Gospel. Joseph and Mary undoubtedly knew of each other's experience ; but by the time the Evangelists wrote, the two sets of traditions had grown apart, and he who knew the one did not know the other. One who had read the first two chapters of St. Matthew could not have written the first two chapters of St. Luke. This does not mean that the traditions departed from the facts which gave them their origin, for wherever they do touch, their close agreement indicates that they perpetuate a common truth, but that each tradition had been preserved by people who had lost sight of each other. All the stronger is their evidence to that common truth.

The objection to the Gospel of the Infancy comes rather from prejudice than from knowledge.

The principal objection to these narratives is that they allege events to have happened elsewhere unknown in human experience : in other words, that the events could only have happened in violation of physical and universal law. But the writers knew, as all men know, that these events were departures both from experience and from law. They treat them as such, and they make them known to a world which they are aware will also treat them as such. That men

thought such departures were possible is evident, as we have already affirmed, from the legends of incarnations and supernatural births which have come down from remote antiquity and from many lands. The legends may have been foolish and false, but that they were entertained, even were it only as illustrations of some mystical and hidden truth, shows that they who invented them, and they who accepted them, did not feel that they ran contrary to reason, or that they outraged common sense, even though they violated natural law. There is, however, we repeat, nothing to show that the Evangelists either knew of them or thought of them. Because such legends were rife is no proof that the Evangelists copied them, or followed a development which led to them; nor is there any proof that the Evangelists endeavoured to meet a theological or philosophical requirement, and so prepared their story. Had the writers of the narratives in question known of them, two results might have been expected: first, an attempt to justify by them the extraordinary nativity of our Lord, even as St. Matthew fastened upon a possible allusion in Isaiah; and, secondly, a repudiation of the possibility of the recurrence of an event which from its nature could have happened but once. So far as Christianity was concerned, there could have been but one incarnation, and but one Christ.

The Evangelists, being men of ordinary experi-

The Evangelists were fully sensible that the events they recorded would be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

ence and sagacity, must have known the difficulties of the story.

The Virgin-birth was necessarily unique. The circumstances which attended it were extraordinary. It did violate a law, and it was the only known historical violation of that law; though they may have reflected that He who made the law could also change the law. The fact was bound to put faith sorely to the test, and till the end of time to call forth clamorous denials. They knew all this. They were as cognizant of the laws of nature as we are; and in this particular were as much exposed to unbelief. Nor were they untaught, inexperienced, or unlearned men: unless we suppose such are capable of writing narratives such as these. And in any case this much must be conceded: they saw no reason why a fact, which of necessity and from its very nature was miraculous and exceptional, should be denied because some might think it impossible. Nor may we overlook the probability that had the Evangelists been inventors of fictions, rather than recorders of facts, they would have said something to explain or to extenuate the creation of an occurrence so unusual in human experience, and so sure to arouse human suspicion. Some suggestion of apology would have betrayed their design. It is possible that some ages are more credulous and more easily imposed upon than others, though, as a matter of fact, these qualities are as frequent and active in an age which boasts itself as possessed of more common sense and scientific penetration than any age the world hitherto has known; but human nature remains

the same, and the temptation to justify a fable that involves exceptional conditions is irresistible. Only fact can be left to take care of itself. The Evangelists had no doubt of the facts; and they write for readers who can discern truth when they see it. Had the Evangelists added argument, they would have suggested that after all the event they recorded was beyond belief.

It is because some readers conclude that the events recorded in these narratives are impossible, that the narratives are impugned, and their excision from the Gospels is demanded. But the exceptional character of an event is no evidence of its impossibility. Were we not familiar with the processes of life, so mysterious and wonderful are they, we should say that such processes were inconceivable. Unless we know all the resources of nature, and the power of the Being who created the principles and laid down the laws of nature, we are not justified in declaring an act of nature impossible simply because it is strange and unfamiliar. Truth is not to be set aside because an objector does not like it. Even should it be true that there are people possessed by a hatred against Christ,—a phenomenon as curious as it is unhappy, and yet implying a belief in His existence, and in His exercise of qualities which they dislike,—yet, difficult as it is to discover whence such hatred arises, prejudice is no evidence against fact. One would hope, however, that the rejection of the facts and doctrines involved in the Incarnation comes from intellectual obtuseness rather

"We are *not* justified in the *a priori* assertion that the order of nature, as experience has revealed it to us, cannot change."—Prof. T. H. Huxley, *Life*, ii. 297.

than from an emotion of this kind; and better still from thoughtlessness and ignorance. The difference is significant between "I cannot believe" and "I will not believe."

Argument is of no avail when the problem has been decided adversely beforehand.

We have little hope of removing the objections of those who have determinedly rejected the narratives before us, but we feel that it is possible to help those whose heart and mind lead them to the acceptance of the faith of Christendom, and to guard them somewhat against the destructive criticism of the age. We use the term "destructive" with a purpose; for there is a criticism which, by clearing the atmosphere and removing notions which are mistaken and injurious, strengthens faith and illuminates knowledge. We have no fear of examination, however severe it may be, if it be honest and impartial. As we have maintained again and again, from such truth has nothing to fear. Therefore, partly to bring to bear upon the series of questions which arise concerning the birth, infancy, and childhood of our Lord the light of modern scholarship, whether for or against the commonly accepted conclusions, and partly to illustrate and expound the stories and doctrines thereto belonging given in the Gospels, we intend examining in detail the incidents, eighteen in number, which are given in the early chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke. Nor shall we refrain, if opportunity be afforded, of adding to the interest of the subject by legend or tradition. By this we hope to reinvigorate the interest of the reader in the beginnings of the earthly preparation of Jesus Christ for His

passion, perhaps to make clearer its salient characteristics, as we have endeavoured to set forth some phases of His heavenly preparation.

I. THE ANNUNCIATION TO ZACHARIAS: Luke i. 5–25.

There was in the days of Herod, king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah: and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

Now it came to pass, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to enter into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the hour of incense.

And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: because thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God. And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts

of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him.

And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak unto thee, and to bring thee these good tidings. And behold, thou shalt be silent and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall come to pass, because thou believedst not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and they marvelled while he tarried in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: and he continued making signs unto them, and remained dumb.

And it came to pass, when the days of his ministration were fulfilled, he departed unto his house.

And after these days Elisabeth his wife conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord done unto me in the days wherein he looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men.

Of the Archangel Gabriel: *e.g.* Rev. viii. 2; Tobit xii. 15. *Paradise Lost*, iii. 648–653.

Of the Seven Angels which Jewish and Christian tradition represent as standing before God, "which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One," Gabriel, *i.e.* Man of God, or God my Strength, ranks second, Michael, captain-general of the host of heaven, being first, and Raphael, chief of the guardian angels, third. Legend

dealt freely with Gabriel, as with the other archangels. He is said to have been the angel who wrestled with Jacob at the brookside till the breaking of the day; the "man" who showed Joseph the way to his brethren; one of the ministrants at the burial of Moses; and the warrior sent by God to destroy the army of Sennacherib. In later story he is spoken of as the angel who strengthened Christ in Gethsemane. Dante and Milton did him honour as one of the princes of heaven: the former making him the attendant-singer to the Blessed Virgin,—"the sweetest melody of earth would be as harsh thunder-roar compared with the infinite sweetness of his song"; and the latter describing him as chief guardian of Paradise. But more than aught else, he appears in Jewish legend as the herald of the birth of remarkable men.

Paradiso, xxiii. 93–108.

The Annunciation to the wife of Manoah: Judges xiii.; Josephus, *Antiq.*, Bk. v. ch. viii.

He may not have been the angel who promised Isaac to Abraham and Sarah,—the narrative infers that Jahveh did this Himself; but he is supposed to have been the "man of God" who appeared to the wife of Manoah the Danite, and foretold the birth of Samson. According to Josephus, the man and his wife pleaded constantly with God for a child to succeed them; and the delay occasioned bitterness and jealousy. One day, when alone, perhaps pondering and worrying over the matter, the wife saw an apparition,—a figure of a young man beautiful and tall; and she told her husband: "A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God,

very terrible; and I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name: but he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb to the day of his death." Manoah was not satisfied, and prayed that the messenger of God might again appear. His desire was granted. "And the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman made haste, and ran, and told her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am." The welcome message was renewed. The messenger of God refused the offering that Manoah would make, and bade him present it to Jahveh. So the sacrifice was prepared and set on a rock: "And the angel did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar: and Manoah and his wife looked on; and they fell on their faces to the ground. But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah or to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord."

A similar legend is preserved in the Apocry-

phal Gospels concerning Joachim and Anna, the father and mother of the Blessed Virgin. Though of early date, that which is not fiction in this story is imitation. Twenty years of married life had passed, and to Joachim and Anna neither son nor daughter had been born. On one occasion, Joachim was repulsed by a priest as he stood ready to offer his sacrifice to God. So keenly did he feel the reproach, that he left the temple, and, instead of returning home, took his shepherds and went far away into the mountains. Then one day, as Joachim was feeding his flocks on the mountain, an angel appeared to him, and made known that in due time his wife would bear him a daughter. Like Manoah, Joachim at once offered a burnt-offering to the Lord, and "the angel and the odour of the sacrifice went together straight up to heaven with the smoke." A little earlier, as Anna, grieving at her ill fortune and her husband's absence, was watching a sparrow's nest in a laurel bush, an angel suddenly appeared to her, and said, "Be not afraid Anna, for there is seed for thee in the decree of God; and all generations even to the end shall wonder at that which shall be born of thee."

The Annunciation to Joachim and Anna.

The only place in the Old Testament where the archangel is mentioned by name is in Daniel viii. 16; ix. 21. He is probably referred to in x. 11. A remarkable vision had perplexed the prophet; and as he sought for its meaning, there stood before him as the appearance of a man. He heard a human voice, floating in the

The Vision o the Archange to Daniel.

air between the banks of the river Ulai, and bidding the angel speak: "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." The kindly spirit drew near to the prophet: "and when he came," said Daniel, "I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man; for the vision belongeth to the time of the end." The prophet was greatly perturbed, and as the angel spoke to him he fell into a deep trance on his face toward the ground: but the angel touched him, and set him upright. Then he explained to him the vision. "And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days." Soon after this, Daniel made a special confession of sins and prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem; and while in this act, "the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, [or, as another reading has it, being sore wearied, *i.e.* perhaps, with the speed and the long flight], touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to make thee skilful of understanding." Later still than this, Daniel saw a vision of a certain man clothed in linen, girded with pure gold of Uphaz: his body was like the beryl, [the chrysolite or topaz], his face as the appearance of lightning, his eyes as lamps of fire, his arms and his feet like in colour to burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. Again all strength went from the prophet, and he fell into a deep trance, from which the angel roused him, and

set him on his feet trembling. The purposes of these appearances of the angel to Daniel are for us unimportant: all that we need observe are the kindliness, the dignity, and the splendour of the heavenly visitant. For the first time in the canonical writings names are given to two of the watchers and holy ones come down from heaven, first to Gabriel, the gentle interpreter of mysteries, and secondly to Michael, one of the first princes,—afterwards called pre-eminently *the* archangel, and the captain of the celestial warriors. Jude 9; Rev. xii. 7.

The Visit to Zacharias.

And now it is, that Gabriel is sent to announce to Zacharias the birth of a son in his old age and with a wife advanced in years and barren. The circumstances are as strange as were those which belonged to the occasions when the archangel visited Manoah in the field, and Daniel by the riverside. All that we know of Zacharias and of Elisabeth is told in St. Luke's Gospel of the Infancy. He was a member of one of the twenty-four courses of priests, known as the course of Abijah; and was now in Jerusalem according to the order of the ministration of his course. She, the daughter of a priest, and having the same name as Aaron's wife, probably remained in their home among the highlands of Judæa. Many blessings had been theirs, and in the eventide of their days they could look back on a blameless life, happy in the consciousness of God's favour and their neighbours' respect. And yet in their hearts, perhaps never so gently, sadness rested: Zacharias had gone to Jerusalem

many times, yet his priesthood had not received its highest recognition, and the home was childless. At last, after many years of hope and desire, upon the aged priest had fallen the lot to enter the Holy Place and offer incense, the loftiest and most coveted function of the ancient priesthood. Only once in his lifetime could this honour come to any priest. Hence to Zacharias it was of all days most memorable; and afforded him the opportunity, under circumstances which were supposed to be peculiarly propitious, of asking God to grant him the desire of his heart. Never before had he stood at the altar of incense, or had he been the chosen representative of Israel. The attendants who had made everything ready, and had vested him in his white robes, withdrew, and he was left alone in the awful presence,—between the Deity who dwelt beyond the veil in the Holy of Holies, and the people who waited the other side of the veil through which he had entered.

Zacharias before the Altar.

On the altar glowed the embers upon which at a given signal the priest would cast the incense; the seven lamps of the candlestick glimmered: but for these, the sacred chamber had been in darkness. All was still: the congregation without; within, the very air. Zacharias waited, prepared for or having performed his official act, offering up his own supplication, the one wish of his heart, and perhaps expecting that possibly God would further honour him by some manifestation of His presence and favour. Possibly Zacharias may have heard of the ex-

perience of the high priest, Simon the Just, some two hundred and fifty years earlier: "For those forty years wherein he had served as high priest, he had seen an angel clothed in white coming into the Holy Place on the day of Expiation, and going out again; only his last year he saw him come in, but did not see him go out again; which gave him to understand that he was to die that year." But that is doubtful; and we can well believe that when Zacharias beheld an angel standing on the right side of the altar of incense, probably on the side where there was an entrance into the Holy of Holies, whence the angel may be supposed to have come, he was struck with consternation.

Lightfoot's *Horæ Hebraicæ*, on Luke i. 11.

The words of the angel imply that the supplication for a son had just been made,—the verb is in the aorist; and the son promised was described to be such as parents would desire who, in the strictly legal sense which the words had acquired, were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. He should be a Nazarite, according to the law of Moses, and he should fulfil the prophecy given through Malachi. His greatness should manifest itself in his influence for good upon his people. Like Samuel, another child given in answer to prayer, all his days he should be consecrated to the Lord. Such a son had been the desire of Zacharias, anxious for the regeneration of Israel. Perhaps, like many another devout Israelite, he had wondered whether to him would come the honour of giving

The Childless Priest.

Num. vi.; Judges xiii. 5, 7; xvi. 17. As nothing is said about his hair being untouched, some have thought that John was not strictly a Nazarite.

Mal. iv. 4.

the prophet that should be to Israel a second Elijah. No nobler ambition could there have been. And the more he built thereon his hopes, and pleaded for their realization, and endeavoured to shape his own life and the life of the woman anxious and devout as he, the stranger seemed the silence and the sadder the childless home. Possibly in his earnest prayer this morning at the altar of incense, Zacharias thought not so much of a son, or of what he would have that son be and do, as of the evidence the gift of a child would be that neither moral reproach nor punishment for sin could be laid against him and his wife. To be childless was regarded as an indication of Divine disfavour and of personal wrongdoing. It showed that the piety of Zacharias and Elisabeth had been at fault, and that in spite of their scrupulousness they had overlooked the observance of some of the many hundreds of precepts laid upon pious Israelites by the rabbis.

The surprise of doubt.

But Zacharias, like many other earnest and godfearing souls, was inconsistent. He prayed without faith. On this occasion, while seizing the opportunity to offer the petition which had become the habit of a lifetime, he felt its hopelessness: "I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." Or did he fail to realize his want of faith till unexpectedly he was put to the test? Most likely he had long since ceased to look for an answer to his prayer, even though he continued to offer the prayer. The answer to the prayer overwhelmed him with

astonishment. A son, no matter how ardently desired, had become the last thing to look for.

The reality of the vision.

It is not possible to determine the nature of the vision which appeared to Zacharias. The narrative has been taken to imply that the figure he saw and the voice he heard were realities objective and external to himself, and not fancies created by an expectant and feverish imagination. But it is doubtful, even had other persons been present, that they would have either seen the figure or heard the voice. Ecstatic conditions are seldom found in men of advanced years, and still more rarely in priests who have been sobered down by years of plain living and routine service; but Zacharias may have been an exception to the general rule. The desire to leave behind him some one to bear his name and perpetuate his family had not been diminished by disappointment. The dreams of his younger days had not entirely faded away. He had pictured to himself the son he would have: an earnest, pious, ascetic man. Perhaps he had found a type of such in Israel's ancient hero, Samson,—one who should be morally and spiritually what the son of Manoah had been physically; one who should destroy the evils that prevailed in Israel, as he had done battle with the Philistines. And now in this nearest approach to Deity that had ever been vouchsafed him, not only may he have poured out the yearning wish of his life in earnest supplication, but he may also have recalled instances in which God had given some manifestation of His

presence and favour. He believed, as people of his day generally believed, in the existence of angels, messengers of God sent to reveal the Divine will to such as were chosen of God to receive such revelation. Indeed, both Jew and Pagan thought of God as having communication with man in ways other than those afforded by nature. The spiritual world was not apart from and far away from the world of the common, physical, and everyday life; but intermingled with it, part of it, close at hand, its mysteries affecting the present, and not reserved for some future method of existence. In all probability Zacharias continued stedfast in the faith, as well as in the righteousness, of his fathers. The more he thought of these things,—the farther his soul entered into the spirit-realm, and the stronger became the ecstasy,—the nearer he approached the moment when the eyes of sense should be opened to see things that are hidden from the sight of men whose thoughts are absorbed in the things of this world. In the dim light, he beheld the angel:—his own conception thrown out as it were distinct and apart from himself? We cannot say. Perhaps, as with the young man for whom the prophet desired spiritual sight, the experience meant no more than that, in answer to his prayer, for the nonce, God had simply taken away the veil, and allowed him a glimpse into the invisible life. In this case, the extraordinary thing was not the angel, but Zacharias's power to see the angel. As we do not know the mystery we cannot solve the

2 Kings vi. 17.

problem. It is evident, however, that Zacharias saw a vision which in every sense was to him as real as aught in the material world could be.

Did the angel cause the affliction, or simply foretell what he knew would happen?

If it be said that the inability to speak, which the angel declared should be the result of the priest's doubt, is evidence of the reality of the vision separate from Zacharias's condition of mind, we should remember the possibilities of the effect of a strong emotion or a suggestion upon the physical powers. Zacharias may have been convinced that his doubt had for years stood in the way of his hope, and have felt that punishment was due him therefor. The dumbness may have been the effect of his own action or condition. His mind assumed arbitrary control of his body. He could not will to speak,—he, who had ventured to reproach God with the inability to carry out the assurance which He had given him. They who desire to reduce the supernatural and miraculous to the lowest degree possible, may thus set this difficulty aside.

The wonder, however, is not with Zacharias, but with Elisabeth.

The crux of the narrative does not lie in the vision, or in the effect of the vision upon the speech of Zacharias, but in the restoration to Elisabeth of powers which in the course of nature had passed away :—if they had ever been given her. This restoration is scarcely second in wonder to the Virgin-birth itself. Nor does it seem fair to reason it away, by supposing that Elisabeth was an exception to the rule of life, and that, though well stricken in years, power had remained latent in her. The intention of the narrative is as evident as in the case of

Abraham and Sarah. There is no alternative to the acceptance or rejection of the miracle in its plain, literal sense. That plain, literal sense cannot be reduced to metaphor. It may run counter to our knowledge of the laws of nature; but, if we admit the fact of God, it does not run counter to the possibility that He who made those laws may change them. There may be occasions in the Divine economy when exceptions, indeed violations, are called for. And again we admit, that in this instance, as in all other instances of such exceptions or violations, our acceptance of the fact turns, not on the possibility of God's power, but upon the historical evidence. We repeat the question we have stated before: It is not *could* God do it, but *did* He do it? In the case of the birth of John the Baptist, we have no evidence but that of the document before us. We know no argument, however, though some are brought forward, sufficient to induce us to reject that document as untruthful and invalid. If we refuse to accept its historical worth, for the same reasons we shall have to reject the greater mass of the records of the past, and rule out the history derived from such.

The popular faith in visions.

The people accounted for the length of time Zacharias remained in the sanctuary, and for his dumbness, by the supposition that he had seen a vision. While such supernatural phenomena were uncommon, yet they were regarded as neither impossible nor unexpected. The Messianic hope possessed Israel at this time more

firmly and extensively than ever. Many devout souls felt that the darkest hour before the dawn had come, and that at any moment the rays which should break the darkness might appear. God would visit His people after these generations of oppression, as He had visited their fathers in the days when He turned again the captivity of Israel, and earlier as He saved them from the hand of the Egyptians. Once more He would reveal Himself by the prophets: their old men should dream dreams, and their young men should see visions. Zacharias had been thus favoured. God had spoken to him; and possibly by him renewed His favour to Israel. The benediction was given by the attendant priest, who earlier had brought the fire from the altar of burnt-offering to kindle the incense; so that the beckoning made by Zacharias was in answer to enquiries concerning his delay and appearance. The lips which should have spoken were silent; and no sound entered into his ears. What he had seen or what he had heard, he only knew.

Joel ii. 28.

II. THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN: Luke i. 26–38.

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed [wedded, *Wycliffe;* spoused, *Tyndale;* affianced, *Geneva*] to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured [full of grace, *Vul.*, *Wyc.*, and *Tyn.;* freely beloved, *Gen.*], the Lord is with thee; [blessed

art thou among women: omitted in *Cod. Sinaitic* and *Vatican:* being brought up from verse 42]. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be.

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour [grace, *Wyc.* and *Tyn.*] with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son [child, *Tyn.*], and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elisabeth thy kinswoman [cousin, *Wyc.*, *Tyn.*, and *A.V.*], she also hath conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren. For no word from God shall be void of power.

And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In this passage appears the earliest mention of the Blessed Virgin. From it we learn that her name was Mary, that she lived at Nazareth, a town in Galilee, and that she was espoused or betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. From John xix. 25 we gather that she had a sister,—not necessarily "Mary the

wife of Clopas," for there may have been *four* women standing at the Cross; nor certainly Salome, the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John. Besides this sister and Elisabeth, nothing is known of her family or relations: the tradition that her parents were named Joachim and Anna first coming to light in the fourth century. The opinion that she was poor is entertained almost universally. But if, from her offering two turtle doves at the Purification, poverty be inferred, some degree of wealth may be deduced as easily from the journeys to the hill country of Judæa and to Jerusalem, and from the flight into Egypt. She is spoken of as dwelling in her "own house," while the standing of her family appears in her kinship to Elisabeth, wife of the priest Zacharias, and in her reputed Davidic descent. Zebedee, possibly her brother-in-law, was comparatively a man of means, for he had "hired servants." If she were the author of the Magnificat, she had a culture and refinement somewhat removed from peasant life. Whether poor or well-to-do, however, the story of the Annunciation suggests a maiden of simple habits, unaffected piety, and beautiful devotion, one whose virtues and charms have made her the embodiment of the highest ideals of womanhood, and of all the daughters of Israel the one best qualified to be the "handmaid of the Lord." On the other hand, Bishop Pearson reminds us, that "Christ, who commended the faith of the centurion, the love of Mary Magdalene, the excellencies of John the

Epiphanius, *Hæres*, lxxviii. § 17.

Mark i. 20.

On the Creed, p. 304.

Baptist, hath not left the least encomium of his mother."

The scene of the Annunciation is not told. See Mrs. Jameson's *Legends of the Madonna*, pp. 165–185; Farrar's *Christ in Art*, pp. 219–231.

No intimation is given of the place, time, circumstances, or conditions of the Annunciation. Legend has been industrious and venturesome on a subject of so much interest, and sometimes legend helps to apprehension; but of information the narrative is the only source. The Blessed Virgin may have been at her devotions, whether in the morning or the evening, in the night or at midday, is not told; or she may have been at her household duties. Sometimes she is represented as bearing water in a pitcher from the well; elsewhere as spinning wool. Such particulars can never be known. Perhaps, after the manner of a pious and an earnest Israelite, she was meditating upon the history and necessities of her people, and the promises vouchsafed them by God of redemption and prosperity. Or she may have been dreaming of the new life which lay before her, so happy in its mystery and so full of possibilities. At any rate, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that she had so engaged her heart and mind, as to make congruous, if not possible, the vision of the angel.

The effect of the vision on the Virgin.

As Zacharias had been, she was indeed troubled at the appearance and salutation of the angel. This disturbance indicates that the vision was objective, and that, not in ecstasy or fancy, but with her eyes she saw and with her ears she heard the heavenly visitant. Whether at the time she appreciated this reality, or per-

suaded herself that it was simply a creation of her own fancy, we may never know; but it is possible that, with the exception of Joseph, for many years she kept the whole episode to herself, feeling that it could not be spoken of, or if spoken of that it would not have been believed; and it is further possible that she did not grasp its meaning till the Resurrection itself revealed to her the nature of her Son. Then became plain that which she had allowed herself to think was little or no more than a maiden's dream, and which she may have almost forgotten. Then she knew and understood. Memory brought back the scene, the past became as the present, and she told the story which so long had rested hidden in her heart.

The existence and mission of angels not denied.

And yet it should be remembered that in those days people lived more conscious of the supernatural and unseen world than we do. Angels were not unheard of, though their appearance was not common experience; and probably no devout Israelite so much as questioned the possibility of their bringing messages from God to man. Not only had Jacob seen the angels of God ascending and descending the steps of light, and had met the host of them at Mahanaim, but the teachers of Israel had spoken of the angels having charge of God's people, encamping round about them that fear Him, delivering them from all evil, and keeping them in all their ways. Even the pagan was not doubtful of such possibilities. The "other world," with its mysterious inhabitants, was ever close at hand, and at any

moment the veil might be lifted. Or, to put it another way, just as the scenes and personages of this life were hidden from the blind, so spiritual blindness hid the scenes and personages of that other life ; but at any time sight might come. The things were there to be seen, if only one could see them. It has been reserved for later generations to doubt if there is anything beyond the veil, and to remove themselves so far away that they are unable either to touch the veil, or even to believe there is a veil. Mary had no such scepticism. No doubt seems to have entered her mind as to the fact of the angel. Her trouble lay in the appearance and message to her : why she should have been chosen for so high an honour. Indeed, a strict construction of the passage shows that it was not so much the appearance that troubled her as the saying. She cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

The meaning of the angel's greeting.

The words of the salutation have been diversely translated. If by "gratiâ plena" the Vulgate means that she had received the fulness of grace, and not that she was the giver of grace,—as Bengel puts it, that she was not a mother of grace, but a daughter of grace,—the expression might stand. But for many centuries the interpretation popularly has gone to the theory that the Blessed Virgin bestows grace, that she is a benefactress rather than a recipient, a queen to give rather than a dependant to receive. It is safer, therefore, and more accurate, to translate κεχαριτωμένη as in the A.V. by "highly favoured,"

or, as in the R.V. margin, "endued with grace," and illustrate the rendering by the further assurance of the angel, in verse 30, "thou hast found favour [or grace] with God." The word occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in Eph. i. 6, and there evidently is used of grace imparted, of our being made gracious or acceptable in the Beloved,—"grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

The incarnation not certainly revealed to Mary.

The message does not necessarily imply the incarnation, *i.e.* that the Son to be born of Mary was "God of God, very God of very God." Five things are said of Him: (α) He shall be great; (β) He shall be called the Son of the Most High; (γ) the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; (δ) He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and (ε) of His kingdom there shall be no end. Of these five promises, the second (β) is the only one that possibly could be thought to contain an intimation of His deity or divinity; and this is too vague to be conclusive. We do not say this to suggest that our Lord was not all that the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds declare Him to be, and that the Church through all the Christian ages has believed Him to be,—but to express our conviction that at this time the Blessed Virgin had no thought that her Child would be the Incarnation of God, in other words, that she would become in any sense the Mother of God.

She probably thought that the Child promised might

The things which were said of Him by the angel might well be construed as indicating His Messiahship; and possibly the Blessed Virgin

be Israel's Messiah.

understood that she was to be the mother of the Messiah. She knew the hope of Israel and the promises made by the fathers; but from the few references to her in the Gospels outside of these preliminary chapters we gather that, though devout and pure, as we believe her to have been, she was not quick to apprehend, nor had she a readiness to understand or grasp new facts or strange suggestions. With all reverence for her beautiful character, and with no wish to detract from the honour due her, we fancy her to have been slow in mental perception, perhaps one with those of whom Isaiah and the writer of Hebrews spoke, "dull of hearing." It is therefore difficult to conjecture how far she realized that Jesus was the Messiah: that He was more, we do not think she had at this time any idea. The Messiah should be a prince of the house of David, and should reign for ever over Jacob. He should be great and His kingdom without end. But there is no certainty that Israel ever thought of the Messiah as being God Himself. He was the servant of Jahveh, and in His glory and power might well be thought of as the Son of the Most High; but that He was one with the Father, as He Himself claimed to be, and as the Church maintains Him to be, does not appear to have been a Jewish conception.

Matt. xiii. 15; Heb. v. 11.

The revelation of Deity would have endangered her powers of motherhood.

Had the Blessed Virgin learned from the message of the angel that such would be indeed the nature of the Child, her bearing toward Him would have been far otherwise than the history and the conditions indicate. To nurse, bring

up, develop and care for a Child that she knew was the Incarnation of God would have been impossible, or, if not impossible, yet unreal and unnatural. Fear and awe would have hindered the exercise of those motherly instincts and anxieties necessary for One whose experience should be that of humanity. He could scarcely have been subject to His parents, had they realized that He was more than human ; nor had she believed him to be divine, would His mother have wondered at the visit of the shepherds, or at the things spoken by Simeon, or at His lingering behind at Jerusalem.

To her He was simply a Child of wonderful promise.

It is indeed doubtful if she even understood that He was to be the Messiah. She believed that He would be an extraordinary man and would do an extraordinary work, as probably every mother hopes for her son ; but, had she believed more than this, she would have restrained His kinsfolk or brethren during His ministry from holding that He was beside Himself, and scarcely would she have gone with them apparently to take Him away. The only references to her in the Gospels indicate that in the Annunciation the mystery of the Incarnation was not revealed to her. At the time her thoughts turned from the description of the Child, which wonderful and suggestive as it was did not appear either to astonish her or to create the slightest doubt, and, taking for granted that the angel spoke truth, she questions the manner of motherhood under the circumstances. Her difficulty was natural, and indicates

both her purity and her common sense. And yet some have thought her question not without indelicacy; and have even wished it were not in the narrative. It is claimed that without these words, the context runs smoothly, and some have argued that conception by the Holy Ghost does not necessarily exclude human paternity. Curiously enough it does not appear in the Old Latin Version (Codex Veronensis, manuscript of the fourth or fifth century; version most likely two centuries earlier), which in place of the 35th verse inserts the 38th verse: probably ruling the question out because implying an unbelief which is contradicted in the 45th verse. So for purpose of controversy, John Damascene, writing against the Nestorians, in quoting this verse omits the clause ἐπει ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω. But the text appears with absolute uniformity in every Greek manuscript of the New Testament known, and in all other ancient versions. St. Jerome supplied it in his corrections of this version; and whatever variations there may be in the quotations given by the fathers can be easily accounted for. The textual authority for the verse is unimpeachable. In English the translation has varied: Tyndale and the Genevan rendered it, "seeing that I know no man"; Wycliffe and the Rhemish, "for I know not man"; the A.V. and R.V., "seeing that I know not a man." The omission of the article and the use of the present tense have been construed to imply that virginity was not only Mary's condition at the time, but would con-

Moffat's *Intro. to Liter. of N. T.*, pp. 268–270.

See *Irish Theological Quarterly*, April 1913, for an article on this text by the Rev. Francis F. Gigot.

See in above *Quarterly*, p. 131.

tinue to be so all her life,—her words being understood a "votum virginitatis perpetuo servandæ." "How can I have a child, since I have resolved (or vowed) to remain for ever a virgin?" If so, then it is strange that she should have been betrothed to a man, and afterwards should have been esteemed as his wife; nor were such vows regarded by the Jews favourably. Rather do the words indicate her consciousness that the promise could hardly be fulfilled under present conditions. No appreciation, or even suspicion, of the union of the two natures in Christ entered her mind, or her perplexity had been other than what it was. She seems to have dismissed at once the possibility that Joseph could be the father of her Child: she was not at the time married to him. The angel removed her doubt by the assurance of a divine and supernatural intervention: "Wherefore,—because of this intervention,—that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." He shall be so called, not here because He is the Messiah, much less because He is God, but for the reason that His human nature was produced directly by Divine power. That this stupendous and unique miracle is not beyond the power of God may be inferred, as the angel makes known to Mary, from the miracle, scarcely less strange, which had been wrought in Elisabeth: "for with God nothing shall be impossible"—"no word from God shall be void of power."

The Cult of Mary, by Rev. T. J. Gerrard, p. 23. This is the substance of the answer as it is paraphrased in the *Aurea Legenda*.

It is not necessary to suppose that the Blessed

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Acquiescence without intellectual apprehension.

Virgin understood the wonder of the Conception any more than she realized the fact of the Incarnation; but no doubt of the power of God entered her mind. Her faith was complete and sublime; her submission, no less so: and this notwithstanding the reproach that awaited her from those who would not understand. No explanations could be given: for until the manifestation of Christ had been made, and His deity had been recognized, no explanation would have been believed. Yet she replied, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." In that moment of acquiescence, the miracle was accomplished.

Curious speculations as to Christ's consciousness before birth.

Notwithstanding that which in this study we have said, or shall say, concerning the human consciousness of our Lord, we may not ignore the widespread and persistent persuasion that our Lord continued conscious of Himself and of His surroundings in and from the very moment of His conception in the Blessed Virgin. We have to speak somewhat enigmatically, and would not refer to the subject at all were it not that this opinion so grossly violates that principle of the Incarnation by which Christ conformed to the experiences of humanity. If consciousness were His in the moment when the Virgin pronounced the *Fiat mihi*, then He knew who He was and where He was even before He was born; and treatises of no little scholarship and of considerable size have come down to us explaining the meaning of that verse in

An anonymous writer, in 1905, published for private distribution a book on the *Virgin Birth*, in which, chiefly from Roman Catholic divines and physicians, he collected some of the most singular methods of explaining the fact: see, *e.g.*, pp. 13, 49.

the Te Deum, "Non horruisti Virginis uterum." St. Thomas Aquinas expressed the general opinion of the Church in affirming that in the first instant of His conception, Christ saw God more clearly than they who were yet in the way,—"as wise as he was in heaven, or when he was thirty years old." This implies that the "non horruisti" pertains to present conditions, and not to an emotion existing before such conditions came into being. So in some editions of the English Prymer, dating from the early years of the fifteenth century, instead of the familiar translation, appear the words, "Thou were not skoymus of the maiden's womb." The "skoymus" indicates a more physical repugnance than the "abhor"; and if the thought thereof be repulsive, thereby is secured a more vivid impression of the extent of the humility. With unquestionable reverence, but with a fulness of detail that more than perplexes the modern reader, the old authors took up every possible phase of the subject. And yet, while this may have been the popular interpretation, perhaps made necessary by certain scholastic premises, the force of which has passed away, we are no more bound by it than we are by the ancient theory that the sun travelled round the earth. The opinion we would set aside has been defended in works some of which run into hundreds of quarto pages, discreetly and safely printed in a dead language, examples of ingenuity which modernism can admire without envy. Like ancient armour they have served their purpose.

Digest of *Doctrine of Incarnation*, cccix.; *Aurea Legenda*, on Annunciation.

Their argument errs, not only in its contradiction of the perfect humanity of our Lord, which involved His passing through all the stages and experiences of man's physical and mental growth, as man passes through them, but also in advocating the possibility of pre-natal consciousness, and in the grossness of the particulars and deductions suggested. If it be said, that the divine consciousness remained necessarily in a Person to whom discontinuity was impossible, we still reply that that consciousness could not have affected the human nature, including the human mind, which our Lord had taken to Himself; nor are we able to predicate of the divinity in Christ as of the humanity. Our experience gives us an analogy for the one, but no knowledge to which we have attained enables us to describe or define the other. If our Blessed Lord became man, then He did indeed humble Himself to be born of a Virgin, but in no sense can we believe that He knew aught of joys and sorrows, or of Himself or His condition, until in the course of years the development came as it comes to every child of woman.

III. THE VISIT OF MARY TO ELISABETH: Luke i. 39–58.

And Mary arose in these days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; and entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth.

"This moving was extraordinary and not natural": *Genevan margin.*

And it came to pass [fortuned, *Tyn.*, *Gen.*], when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she lifted up her

voice with a loud cry, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and [because, *Gen.*] blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me? For behold, when the voice of thy salutation came into mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord.

The Exaltation of the Lord's Handmaiden: "O praise the Lord, ye that fear him: magnify him, all ye of the seed of Jacob, and fear him, all ye seed of Israel; "For he hath not despised, nor abhorred, the low estate of the poor." —Psalm xxii. 23, 24.

And Mary said,
My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath looked upon the low estate [the meekness, *Wyc.*; poor degree, *Tyn., Gen.*; the humility, *Rheims*] of his handmaiden:
For behold, from henceforth all generations [ages, *Gen.*] shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; And holy is his name.

And his mercy is unto generations and generations [throughout all ages, *Gen.*] on them that fear him.

He hath shewed strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination [conceit, *Rh.*] of their heart [with the thought of his heart, *English Prymer*].
He hath put down princes from their thrones [seats, *Wyc., Tyn., Gen.*],
And hath exalted them of low degree [enhaunside meke, *Wyc*].
The hungry he hath filled with good things; Isa. lxv. 13.
And the rich he hath sent empty away [hath left rich men void, *Pry.*]

He hath holpen Israel his servant [took up Israel his child, *Pry.*],

E.g. Psalm cxxxvi.

That he might remember mercy [thinking on his mercy, *Pry.*]
(As he spake unto our fathers)
Toward Abraham and his seed for ever.

And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned unto her house [returned home again, *Tyn.*].

Mary makes no delay in setting out for the hill country of Judæa.

It may have been contrary to custom for a maiden to travel during the period of her betrothal, but in no age or country have exceptions to rules been unknown, and the journey of Mary to her kinswoman was made in *these days*, *i.e.* near the time of the Annunciation, probably immediately after, and "in haste." The haste may have been occasioned by the startling news of Elisabeth's condition, or by the still more wonderful experience which had befallen the Blessed Virgin. The reference by the angel to Elisabeth may have been taken by Mary as a direction. Naturally, too, Mary would desire both to congratulate her, and also to make known to one in whom she could confide her own condition. Where in the hill country of Judæa Zacharias and Elisabeth lived cannot be ascertained; though it has been conjectured that as the towns near Hebron were allotted to the priests, it may have been that they dwelt in this neighbourhood, about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. The hill country of Judæa (Joshua xxi. 11; translated in Josh. xi. 21, xx. 7, "mountains of Judah") described the southern part of the Central Range, or the "Mount of the

Lightfoot's *Horæ Heb.*, iii. 27.

Amorite," which ran through Palestine proper from the desert in the south towards Lebanon in the north, as distinguished from the Eastern Range which lay on the other side Jordan. Had Zacharias resided in Hebron, the place probably would have been named. As it is, the name seems to have been forgotten. But wherever it was, the journey, which must have occupied some days, as well as involved some expense, and which could hardly have been undertaken by a young woman alone, and the length of time that Mary remained with her kinswoman, suggest that the Blessed Virgin both had means, and also control of her actions,—another indication that she could scarcely have been a poor, toiling peasant.

The glad welcome of Elisabeth.

The narrative implies that before Elisabeth uttered the words ascribed to her, Mary had done no more than greet her aged kinswoman: possibly scarcely that much had happened, for the salutation may have been simply a call made as Mary entered the house. In some hall or chamber distant from the door, unexpectedly Elisabeth heard the well-remembered voice. The surprise led to what may be regarded as a natural phenomenon, though it was not so thought of by Elisabeth. No interval may have occurred before Elisabeth made the utterances immediately recorded. Direct revelation may have been vouchsafed her; and both her words of blessing and Mary's Magnificat may have been said while Mary was yet as it were at the door.

But it is not necessary to take it for granted

Elisabeth approaches a mystery not yet to be understood.

that the inspiration came upon Elisabeth immediately. Some time may have passed. There is nothing conclusively to be said against the supposition that the first attentions to a newly arrived guest had been given to the Blessed Virgin, that she had rested and refreshed herself, and that afterwards she had heard Elisabeth's story, and then had told her own. The older woman, we may fairly imagine, listened attentively and wonderingly to Mary's recital of the words of the angel. She understood no more of the message than Mary herself understood; but her faith and discernment were sufficient to convince her that God was about to give One who should be more to the world than any other man had ever been, and of whom her own son should be the precursor. She saw also the pure and mighty faith of the Blessed Virgin, and if, as is most likely, Mary spoke of risks and dangers, undoubtedly she both sympathized with her, and also comforted and advised her. Hence the outburst of enthusiasm. There was for Mary no shame. Mary was herself blessed of God; so, too, was the Child which in due time should be born of her. Elisabeth even interpreted the physical effect of her surprise at Mary's voice as a sign of the divine favour and of the truth of the promise: the leaping or the struggling of the babe she declared to have been for very joy. Rather than an intrusion, as Mary may have feared her visit would be considered, Elisabeth felt it to be an honour; and by the term "the mother of my Lord," she expressed

her appreciation of the promise that the Son of Mary should be a superior among men.

Of the Magnificat.

Possibly the Magnificat immediately followed the words of Elisabeth, and should be regarded as a reply to those words; but neither supposition is more than a possibility, though both have a preponderance of opinion in their favour. There is, however, an elaboration in this hymn, and an ingenious weaving of Old Testament phraseology into its texture, which indicate more than spontaneous creation; and though Mary may have been miraculously inspired to break forth suddenly into one of the most finished and most symmetrical canticles in Sacred Scripture, there is no necessity for such surmise. All that the narrative states is, "And Mary said." Still it should be remembered, that the original text seems to have been simply *και εἶπεν*, "and she said"; and three ancient Latin manuscripts preserve a tradition, said to be older than the times of Irenæus, that it was Elisabeth who spoke. Many scholars favour this tradition, not only on the manuscripts and the testimony of Niceta of Remesiana who vouches for it, but also on such phrases as the reference to the lowliness of His handmaiden, which seems more congruous with Elisabeth's release from barrenness, than with Mary's condition. Further, the expression in verse 56, "And Mary abode with her," apparently implies that it is Elisabeth who has been speaking. On the other hand, scholars as numerous and trustworthy maintain the reading which obtains in all the Greek manuscripts, and

See Moffat's *Intro. to Lit. of N. T.*, p. 271.

Niceta, bp. of Remesiana, in Dacia, and a contemporary of Paulinus of Nola, though now almost forgotten both as a writer and a missionary, has been vindicated by the learned Benedictine Dom Morin as the author of the *Te Deum:* see Bigg's *Wayside*

Sketches, p. 38. The *Quarterly Review* (July, 1914, p. 13) calls Morin "the greatest living authority on Latin patristic literature."

which has been the unfaltering opinion of the Church, that the Magnificat was pronounced by the Blessed Virgin: "and Mary said." The expression, however, need not be made to imply that she composed the sentences she uttered; and it is doubtful, judging from the glimpses afforded of her later, if she were capable of having done so: though there is no evidence that she did not. The story requires only that we should know that she spoke these words, simply as descriptive of conditions which had arisen out of, or which had been illustrated by, her experience. We are not obliged to find out the time when she uttered them, or whether she composed or adopted them. Nor have we to discover in these lines a response to the words of Elisabeth. The task would be far from easy. Nothing more is demanded of us than assent to the record, "And she said." This hymn, than which none more inspiring, delectable, or joyous has ever been written, has been used in divine service, certainly from the fifth century and probably from much earlier times, and should be compared with the song of Hannah (1 Samuel ii. 1–10), and the thanksgiving of Judith (Judith xvi. 1–17).

Of literal records.

It is well, perhaps, here to call to mind that ancient historians were not unaccustomed to interpret what they gathered to be the thoughts of their heroes by putting into their mouths words of their own. The writer entered into such sympathy with the person whose actions he would describe, that he became sure the occasion would

draw out certain expressions. He felt that the words he wrote, if not actually spoken by the one to whom they were ascribed, were in accord with his character and the circumstances. The speech was that which his actions, his spirit, his purpose, would have produced had he spoken. A more exact chronicle is now required; but the knowledge and appreciation of the modern annalist may not be more thorough than were those of the ancient historian. We do not say that the Evangelist himself wrote these words as expressing the spirit of the woman he had studied so carefully, or that he even shaped them to supply a tradition which maintained that she had said something to this effect; but had he done so, he would not have departed either from custom or from what he believed to be true. At all events, the difficulty in the way of such a conjecture is no greater than that of accounting for the record at the time, and the preservation of it till it came into St. Luke's hand some seventy or eighty years later. The Blessed Virgin indeed may have retained it in her mind, as she may also have had the gift of literary composition; but the few hints we have of her during our Lord's ministry do not encourage any such supposition.

IV. THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST: Luke i. 57–80.

Now Elisabeth's time was fulfilled that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy towards her; and they rejoiced with her.

And it came to pass on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet [poyntel, *Wyc.*], and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, blessing God.

And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa. And all that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying, What then shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him.

Thanksgiving for the Coming of Christ.

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
For he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people,
And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of his servant David
(As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began),
Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;
To shew mercy towards our fathers,
And to remember his holy covenant;
The oath which he sware unto Abraham our father,
To grant unto us [to give himself to us, *Wyc.*],
That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies

Should serve him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

The mission of John the Baptist.

Yea and thou, Child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High:
For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways;
To give knowledge of salvation [the science of health, *Wyc.*] unto his people
In the remission of their sins,
Because of the tender mercy of our God,
Whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us,
To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death;
To guide our feet into the way of peace.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

The gathering at the home of Zacharias.

The Blessed Virgin remained with Elisabeth probably till after the birth of John the Baptist; if not, her three months' sojourn must have ended very near that event. The particulars given by St. Luke of the birth of John the Baptist may have come from her. Great rejoicings followed that birth, as the angel had foretold: "Many will rejoice at his birth." The social position of Zacharias and Elisabeth is suggested by the importance attached to the blessing which had come to them, and by the festivities which seem to have been held at the time of the circumcision. The years of childlessness and the age of the mother must have caused some

surprise, but no notice is taken of such. The neighbours and kinsfolk, having heard that the Lord had magnified His mercy towards Elisabeth, sent her their congratulations, and, on the eighth day, came to the feast and ceremony of circumcision.

Of the rite of Circumcision.

The gathering of the friends suggests a pleasant picture of the home life of Zacharias and Elisabeth. Circumcision at this time, and for several centuries later, was performed in the house, and though its original object and signification had been long since lost sight of, the ritual connected with it was scrupulously carried out. Perhaps the meaning attached to it then, and probably still thought of, lay in the shedding of blood,—the child's life, under the symbol of blood, was offered to God. The modern service reads, "From this eighth day and henceforth may his blood be accepted, and may the Lord his God be with him." No covenant or consecration was made without the shedding of blood, this symbolic laying down of a life. The words of Ezekiel xvi. 6 were applied to circumcision, as in the modern service: "It is said, And I passed by thee, and I saw thee weltering in thy blood, and I said unto thee, 'In thy blood live.'" After the shedding of Christ's blood at Calvary, the means, and not the sign only, of the covenant which should never pass away, Christianity had no reason for continuing this rite. Henceforth man is saved, not by his own sacrifice, but by the sacrifice offered by the Lord Jesus once and for all. Except in its essential particular, it

Hastings' *Dict. of Christ.*, i. 331.

would be rash to suppose that the ceremonies now observed in circumcision are the same as those used in the time of Christ. At present the godfather, after taking the child from a woman at the door of the room, sits in a chair beside which is a vacant seat set apart with prayer by the Mohel, as the minister or surgeon of circumcision is called, in memory of Elijah, whose zeal on behalf of this ordinance is highly commended. Prayers are said in Hebrew, the child's name is given, after the recitation of certain formulæ the operation is performed, and a blessing is pronounced. The service over, a feast followed, corresponding to the christening feast of later times, and depending on the ability of the parents. The order at the circumcision of John may have differed from this, but it was either at the giving of the name, which then was done after the circumcision, or as the preparations for the rite were being made, that the question of the name arose. As the name had been enjoined by the angel, its significance should not be lost sight of: the child was indeed the gift or grace of Jahveh, one whom God had bestowed.

Hastings' *Bib. Dict.*, i. 443; and *Ency. Rel.*, iv. 679.

If the friends wondered at the giving to the child a name that was strange to the family, they wondered still more at the recovery by Zacharias of his powers of speech. For nine months he had been dumb, and, from the friends making signs to him, we may infer deaf also: both the punishment of his unbelief, and also the evidence of the miracle he had asked for.

Zacharias's great joy.

But so soon as he traced out on the sanded or waxed tablet the name which the angel had told him should be given to the child, he began to speak, his first utterance being words of praise to God. Thus, again, was the angel's promise fulfilled: "thou shalt have joy and gladness"; and in that grace of fatherhood, Zacharias realized not only the hope which had failed till it seemed to have lost its life and become no better than a fallen and withered husk, but also the recognition and reward of a faithfulness and devotion to duty which had never failed. So that the coming of the Kingdom was preceded by a happiness all the more precious because it sprang out of natural affection. The day of the Messiah shall indeed lead to a night of tears and suffering, but it begins with songs of gladness and a dawn of wondrous light; and the night itself will change into a day brighter and more joyous still, that shall be ever without an ending.

The joy a little child brings.

It is well to think of this happiness in the home in the hill country of Judæa. The child that brought such brightness to the hearts of his aged parents, and led them into a transformed life, would be the preacher of a repentance which should have as its result, not only the weakening of sin, but also the banishment of sorrow. Of this that day Zacharias thought little. He may not at this moment even have dwelt upon the hope that this child, which had brought so much to his house, would prepare the way for the coming of that Messiah for

which he and all Israel prayed every day. The cry of innocence was the harbinger of the shouts of triumph; and the mirth of the feast, the love of the mother, the pride of the father, the kindliness of the friends, all coming out of pure and simple human nature, were as flowers cast in the way, that by and by should lead beyond a Calvary to a throne of glory and a realm of unfading life.

The bringing up of John the Baptist.

The news of the birth of a child under such circumstances, and to people so favourably known as were Zacharias and Elisabeth, spread through the hill country; a feeling came over the people of that region that strange things were about to happen; and they who thought thereon, and perhaps watched the development of the child, were more or less bewildered as to the future of one upon whom manifestly the hand of the Lord had been laid. In him was fulfilled the prayer of the Psalmist, "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself." But until he began his ministry, some thirty years later, nothing further is told of him except that he became strong in spirit, and was brought up in the deserts, that is, in the wild, solitary regions of Judæa towards the Dead Sea and the dreary wastes of Paran. In this lonely and severe life, by asceticism and the rugged surroundings, was developed a strength or habit of spirit fitting for one who should be to Israel what Elijah had been to Ahab, a stern and an

Psalm lxxxiii. 17.

uncompromising preacher of repentance. The temperament which disclosed itself in John the Baptist is not uncommon to men born of parents past the meridian of life. A gravity of manner and seriousness of thought brought on by years of experience and disappointment are apt to be transmitted ; and the child grows up into the habits and tendencies which he beholds day by day displayed in the words, deeds, and countenances of his parents. Nor would this influence be lessened in a home pervaded by the spirit of priestly austerity, in which both father and mother endeavoured to observe carefully the rules of conduct suggested by Old Testament principles and made obligatory by rabbinical interpretations.

The life in the wilderness.

It is probable that Zacharias and Elisabeth died early in John's life ; but, as the inheritor of their possessions, and by virtue of his birth destined to be a priest, it would not have been necessary for him to adopt the wilderness-life. At the best the vocation of a hermit, even if the keeping of sheep or the hunting or snaring of wild animals be added thereto, affords but a precarious existence. If John the Baptist adopted such, he had the means to provide for himself. His retreat to the desert was doubtless as voluntary as it was to him attractive. He desired that freedom from the cares and pleasures of the common life, and that opportunity for reflection and meditation, which so many earnest souls have longed for and secured, in order to prepare themselves the more surely

to observe the Divine will. It is not necessary to suppose that John entered into a community of Essenes, or into any similar society: though the rigidity of his teaching corresponded closely with their philosophy. He probably spent his retirement alone,—or as Rabbi Lightfoot put it, "amongst the rustics, and common rank of men,"—served by some faithful attendant who understood and respected his purpose; and, discovering that the Divine Spirit and human individuality are the only real things in life, he learned, in a sense the schools could not teach him, that their estrangement can be removed only by the restoration of man to holiness. More than this, he became convinced that this restoration could be effected only by grace beyond the will or creation of man; and that that grace could only be obtained when by His death the Son of God had destroyed the force of sin, and opened up the way of life. At the age of thirty, when, according to the custom of his people, he either had been or should have been examined by the Sanhedrin and admitted to his priestly office, he took up his commission as a prophet. The people were ready for his message,—perhaps listening to him the more respectfully because of his priesthood. It is unlikely that John the Baptist ever saw the Lord Jesus, certainly not to recognize Him as the Messiah, till He was revealed to him at the time of the baptism.

Horæ Heb., iii. 30.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

It should be observed that no miracle is attributed to John the Baptist.

As to the hymn attributed to Zacharias, much

"The Song of Zachary; Benedictus; and Thanksgiving for the performance of God's promises."—i. *P. B. Edw. vi.* (*Ed. Grafton C.*).

Hastings' *Dict. of Christ.*, i. 191.

of that which has been said of the Magnificat may be said of it. Differing from the Magnificat, which brings out the thought of Christ's kingship, casting down the proud and exalting the humble, and from the Nunc Dimittis, which refers to His prophetic or enlightening office, the Benedictus touches upon His priesthood,—the song of the blameless priest, beginning with blessing and ending with peace. It has followed the Lesson at Lauds at least since A.D. 820, when it is mentioned by Amalarius. What force should be attached to the statement that Zacharias was "filled with the Holy Ghost" is not clear. The expression is not used of the Blessed Virgin, but it is used of Elisabeth after the salutation. Possibly no distinction was intended, and that both the Benedictus and the Magnificat were thought of as composed under divine inspiration. But, even so, we are not obliged by the narrative to maintain that Zacharias spoke these words then and there, at the time of the Circumcision, and that without preparation and design the sentences fell into their present logical and exquisite form. Beginning and ending with lines from Isaiah, recalling prophecies of Israel's greatness from Genesis, and of Israel's restoration from Jeremiah, the psalm may be understood as expressing Zacharias's assurance of the fulfilment of the promises of God, both as given in the Old Testament and as revealed to him by the angel. His tenderness is shown in the endearing diminutive, "And thou, little child,—*παιδίον*,

this shall be thy mission in life." Perhaps in the lines, "To show *mercy* towards our fathers, and to *remember* his holy covenant; the *oath* which he sware unto Abraham," may be an allusion to the child's name, "the grace or mercy of God," to his own name, "remembered by Jahveh," and to his wife's name, "the oath of God"; but, if so, it is probably due to the ingenuity of the interpreter, and not to the skill of the composer. The office of John is described as twofold: (α) to go before the face of the Lord to make ready His ways, as His herald, ambassador, messenger, and (β) to give knowledge of salvation unto his people [not, be it observed, in political independence for which they so eagerly longed, or in any other temporal or physical blessing which may be desired, but] in the remission of their sins,—as the angel had foretold in the Annunciation; "to prepare the way of thy Son our Saviour, by preaching of repentance,"—"by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." Thus should John, and all other ministers and stewards of the divine mysteries, put things in order for the coming of the King: not only to proclaim His coming, but to induce men to sanctify themselves for His coming. This, and much else, undoubtedly passed through the mind of Zacharias. The canticle is instinct with thoughts which appeal thus to the practical as well as to the imaginative side of our nature. It is a composition charming in its figures and cadences, suggesting a thorough knowledge

of the sacred writings and of Israel's fondest aspirations, displaying, especially in its later lines, a true poetic instinct, and appealing to that hope, common to both Judaism and Christianity, which has enabled the people of the old covenant and the people of the new to wait patiently for the dayspring from on high. It is one of the most beautiful mosaics put together by man, out of gems created by divinest skill. No more worthy song of praise was ever written by a father over the coming of his firstborn!

The R.V. has "the dayspring shall visit us," and notes in margin that many ancient authorities read "hath visited us."

Traditions concerning Zacharias.

Nothing more is recorded or known of Zacharias or of Elisabeth. Some of the fathers attempted to identify him with the "Zacharias son of Barachias," mentioned in Matt. xxiii. 35, who is said by our Lord to have been slain between the sanctuary and the altar. The words "Son of Barachias" are omitted in the corresponding passage in St. Luke, and also in four cursive manuscripts of St. Matthew, and by one of the correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus. But it is next to certain that the reference is to "Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest," spoken of in 2 Chron. xxiv. 20-22, who was stoned to death at the commandment of king Joash, in the court of the house of the Lord, his last words being, "The Lord look upon it, and require it." Among others of this name, Isaiah (viii. 2) describes one as "the son of Jeberechiah," the LXX rendering it "Βαραχίου"; and Zechariah the prophet (i. 7) is himself described as "the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo." In the confusion of these names, the earlier Zachariah

became known as "the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo." This does not, however, make this Zechariah one with him who was the father of John the Baptist. Our Lord's reference was inclusive: "from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias"; and Chronicles being the last book of the Hebrew canon, the latter martyr well answered the purpose. Origen in his commentary on this passage preserves a tradition that the father of John the Baptist was slain in the temple, and elsewhere declares that of the Zacharias spoken of by our Lord, "we learn from Jesus only, not knowing it otherwise from any scripture." The tradition, which was accepted by Baronius, grew with time. In some forms of it we are told that the father of John the Baptist was slain by the soldiers of Herod between the steps and the altar, because he would not reveal the hiding place of Elisabeth and her child. John Damascene, one of the most celebrated theologians of the eighth century, in his homily on Christ's nativity, contradicts St. Chrysostom and St. Jerome, by affirming that our Lord referred to the father of John the Baptist, and that Zacharias was killed by the Jews for having placed Mary the mother of Christ amongst the virgins, after she had borne a son. These stories are no more than guesses to explain the difficulty; but Zacharias having been thus declared a martyr, it is not surprising that his relics were discovered. Cornelius à Lapide said he both saw and venerated his head in the Lateran basilica at Rome. The head is recorded

Josephus (*Wars*, IV. V. 4) mentions a "Zacharias, the son of Baruch," a prominent citizen, who was slain in the temple, not long before the fall of Jerusalem. This was upwards of thirty years after the allusion made by Christ.

Ep. to Africanus, § 9.

Whitaker's *Disputations*, p. 589.

Mirabilia Urbis Romæ, Eng. Ver., pp. 132, 184: Torkington's Narrative, pub. Ldn. 1883: p. 51.

as being there in 1375; and so were the ashes and blood of John the Baptist. The English priest, Richard Torkington, in 1517, visited the house of Zacharias, describing it as five miles from Bethlehem and five from Jerusalem, and he also saw the ruins of the church built over the place where Zacharias sang the Benedictus.

V. JOSEPH'S DREAM: Matt. i. 18–25.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed [was spoused, *Wyc.;* was married, *Tyn.:* Gk. literally, "had been promised or pledged in marriage"] to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is He that shall save his people from their sins [He shall make his people safe from their sins, *Wyc.*].

(Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"; which is, being interpreted, God with us.)

And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had

brought forth a son [her first begotten son, *Wyc.*; her first son, *Tyn.*]: and he called his name JESUS.

Joseph would protect himself, and yet save Mary from disgrace.

Soon after her return to Nazareth, Mary's condition would be apparent to the women of her household. By what means it became known to Joseph we are not told. Evidently he had come,—we venture to think from Bethlehem, which seems to have been his home, and, at any rate, was the home of his forefathers,—to complete the betrothal by making Mary his wife. He knew nothing of the Annunciation, or that the Child was of the Holy Ghost. The historian recognizes the supernatural conception by informing the reader of the latter fact, though he says nothing, probably because he knew nothing, of the visit of the angel to Mary. Perhaps she herself in order to defend her reputation, and to appease the disappointment of Joseph, told Joseph that the angel had spoken of the overshadowing of the Spirit of God: a statement which naturally failed to satisfy Joseph. Much as he loved the woman betrothed to him, and compassionate as he may have felt towards her, he could not in justice to himself proceed with the marriage. No acceptable explanation was forthcoming. His affection, however, and possibly her social standing were such as to induce him to avoid publicity, and quietly to put her away.

A dream changed his intention. The reader will observe that each of Joseph's actions re-

Further consideration, however, induces him to acknowledge Mary as his wife.

corded in the early chapters of St. Matthew is said to have been instigated or brought about by a dream. This may not mean that such actions proceeded from anything but Joseph's own reflection and apprehension of conditions; but after the Hebrew manner all actions, opportune and oftentimes otherwise, are attributed directly to God. It is God who directs, while Joseph exercises the gifts of prudence and resolution given him by God. The story is so wonderful that the writer cannot think of it other than as accomplished by miraculous interposition. Thus, evidently perplexed and disappointed, Joseph fell asleep,—or, as we might say, in the silence of the night fell to thinking the matter over. The more he thought upon it, the more sure he became that some explanation could be made. In his mind sprang up the assurance that whatever had happened to Mary she was pure and guiltless, that the conception had been effected by supernatural agency, and that the Child to be born of her would have an extraordinary vocation. Did not Israel expect some one to come who should rescue and save God's people from the wilderness and captivity of sin, and like Joshua of old lead them into a new Canaan? It was not strange that a devout and earnest Israelite should fall into such fancies, and strengthen them by recalling utterances of the prophets which had come to be interpreted in that direction. This woman was no visionary, but in mind and body as healthy as she was innocent and devout.

Perhaps it was God's will that she should be the mother of the promised Deliverer of Israel. The Child to be born of her should be called Jesus, for He should be a Saviour. There is no thought of incarnation. In his dream or reverie Joseph learned no more than Mary herself had learned in the Annunciation: the Child would be a wonderful man, holy, but not necessarily divine.

Joseph accepts the revelation.

When Joseph awoke from his sleep, or recovered himself from his meditation or reflection, he believed that God had indeed sent a messenger to him; and the impression was so strong, the conclusion so favourable, that he no longer hesitated to complete the marriage contract. He thereby assumed responsibility. The wedding ceremonies were performed, doubtless according to custom, and he who had done honour to the woman he loved, and in honouring her had preserved his own good name and tranquillity of soul, sacredly observed the mystery which he had divined in his dream.

The illustration from Isaiah not thought of by Joseph.

The quotation from Isaiah is not to be understood as made by the angel, but as the comment of the historian. St. Matthew is mindful of prophecies and coincidences, and avails himself of every opportunity of supporting by an allusion to the Old Testament writings an event which in any way seemed strange to him. Joseph himself suspected no connexion between the ancient oracle and the Child that he should call Jesus; nor does such seem to have been thought of by any one till after the Resurrection.

Cf. *ante*, p. 125.

The Genealogies.

By his marriage with Mary, Joseph accepted the legal paternity of the Child which should be born of her. So far as society knew He was Joseph's son, with all the rights which a son could inherit from a father. Hence in the genealogy given by St. Luke, He is said to be the son of Joseph, *as was supposed*,—and the parenthetical clause is of unquestionable authority, appearing in every known manuscript: and thereby He was entitled to rank in the genealogy of Joseph. It should be observed, however, that some authorities would read the passage, "being the son [or descendant], as it was supposed, of Joseph, but in truth of Heli," and others, taking Heli to be the father-in-law of Joseph, read, "Joseph which was the son-in-law of Heli." But a birthright derived through the mother would be contrary to Jewish and Gentile ideas; and the conjecture that St. Luke gives the genealogy of Mary may be dismissed. In St. Matthew, Joseph is said to have been the son of Jacob; and as the word "begat" in Matthew implies only legal heirship, some have taken this to mean that he was really the son of Heli, but the legal heir of Jacob. The genealogy in Matthew is in the reverse order from that in Luke, and in his last particular St. Matthew records that "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ." The feminine pronoun indicates unmistakeably that St. Matthew meant that Jesus was born of Mary, rather than of Joseph. In both genealogies David appears as the ancestor

A.V. *Variorum*, on Luke i. 23.

For other readings of Matt. i. 16, including the Sinaitic-Syriac palimpsest, see Prof. Sanday, in Hast. *Dict. Bib.*, ii. 644.

of Joseph, though for some reason, which has never been conclusively explained, St. Matthew traces the line through the kings of Judah to Solomon, son of David by the widow of Uriah, and St. Luke through princes, of whom nothing is known but their names, to Nathan, another son of David, apparently spoken of by Zechariah as the founder of a family known by the name of the house of Nathan. The two lines unite in Zerubbabel, son of Salathiel, the leader of the people of the Captivity who returned to Judah from Babylon. Differences again appear ; but keen genealogists as the Jewish adversaries of Christianity undoubtedly were, no charge was brought against these genealogies, till long after the time when it was possible by documentary evidence to support or deny the charges. It may be taken for granted that both Evangelists had authority for their respective genealogies, which they felt would be satisfactory to the people for whom they were compiled. It does not appear possible by these genealogies to prove any theory of the descent of the Blessed Virgin. They refer only to the descent of Joseph, and the Lord Jesus obtains His claim to the Davidic ancestry by virtue of His mother's marriage to Joseph. Even were she of the house and lineage of David, she would be enrolled at Bethlehem not in her own right, but because of her relationship to Joseph. The descent of Christ from David, therefore, so far as we can see, is legal and putative, rather than actually of blood.

The perpetual virginity of Mary not to be inferred from St. Matthew's narrative.

The perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord is not to be proved by the statement in the twenty-fifth verse. On the contrary, the implication is that it ceased after she had brought forth a son; and there are scholars who interpret literally the allusion to the brethren of Jesus. To avoid this interpretation, it has been supposed that Joseph had had children by a former wife. But this supposition has not a shred of evidence in its favour, and it is quite as likely that the term "brethren" should be given its usual meaning. The Evangelist, however, seems indifferent on this point. All that he desires is to maintain the Virgin-birth of Jesus who is called Christ: the continued virginity has no bearing on that fact, and so far as the fact is concerned is a matter of no consequence. The possibility of other children might be inferred from St. Luke's expression: "her firstborn son,"—[the words are omitted in the oldest manuscripts of St. Matthew]: and yet the term may not have been used comparatively, for had there been no other children He would still have been her firstborn. On this question the marginal note in the Genevan version of the New Testament is interesting:

Origen, in Matt. x. 17, declares that "those who say so wish to preserve the honour of Mary in virginity to the end."

On Matt. i. 25.

"Christ is here called the firstborn, because she had never none before: and not in respect of any she had after. Neither yet doth this word (till) import always a time following: wherein the contrary may be affirmed, as our Saviour saying, that he will be present with his disciples, till the end of the world, meaneth not that after this world he will not be with them." The same

version consistently interprets "brethren" as "kinsmen" or "cousins."

The tendency has been almost from the beginning to hold that Mary remained ever a virgin.

This has been the popular opinion, for doubtful as the passages referred to may seem, the Church from very early times has favoured the theory of the perpetual virginity. To many minds the contrary has been simply unthinkable. No one doubts the purity of the marital relationship; but, on the other hand, there is no question that from the first Christianity has recognized a superiority in the virgin life. But we do not grasp all that formerly was meant by perpetual virginity unless we understand that Mary was a virgin *ante partum, in partu, et post partum,* which can only be explained by such a line as "Forth he came as light through glass," which description of His birth appears in a Christmas carol of uncertain date. The figure is ancient, and assumes that our Lord's body possessed from the very first the properties of His resurrection body, as when He passed through closed doors to meet the disciples. St. Thomas Aquinas says: "As in His incoming so in His outgoing her virginity remained inviolate, *et utero clauso.*" Such an extreme opinion could not in these days arouse controversy. They who now maintain the theory of perpetual virginity content themselves by affirming that Joseph and Mary remained for ever free from each other. This conclusion may be sentimental, and entirely foundationless, but it is at least as credible as its opposite. Had there been other children, it is not easy to understand why our Lord on the cross did not

Rev. xiv. 4.

On the Incarnation: *Digest*, cccxij.

commend His mother to them, rather than to St. John.

The name JESUS.

The name JESUS, in Hebrew Joshua, meaning the Lord, or Jahveh, is a Saviour, indicates the purpose and mission for which the Word of God, the Son of the Father, came into the world. It is well, in view of the character of this study, that this purpose should receive emphasis again at this point; and particularly because in it lies the principle of Christianity, and the secret of the Church's power and duty. Joseph realized the truth, or at least anticipated the hope at the outset. The Child should be a teacher, but only that He might save His people from the ignorance which leads men into sin. He should be a revealer of mysteries, but only that He might make known the way of escape from sin. He should be a worker of wonders, but only that He might break the bands of sin and set the sinner free. He should be a prince, but only that He might lead the powers of righteousness against sin, and rule in peace and equity a people redeemed therefrom. Sin was the one force against which should be brought to bear the might of the Deliverer of Israel. Joseph knew well the extraordinary strength and persistent energy of that force. But for that force the history of his own people would have been happier, and the admonitions of the prophets would have been unnecessary. Like other devout men, he waited for the consolation of Israel, and longed for the coming in of righteousness. The times were evil, not more so perhaps than other

times had been, but men seemed more powerless than ever to overthrow the evil. Now, in this Child, at the last moment as it were, One should arise to save God's people from their sins. What was this, but to bring man back to holiness, and therefore to God? For this, Christ should be born: to restore the children of God, long since led captive and enslaved by sin, to their heavenly Father. Hence the name given to the Son of Mary,—the Name which is above every name.

The tradition in St. Matthew not so full as that in St. Luke.

Beyond the fact of the virginity, the writer of this narrative knew no particulars of the birth, or, if he knew them, he made no mention of them. He records the place of the birth, but he says nothing of the Virgin's home at Nazareth, or of the journey thence to Bethlehem. Evidently the two sets of tradition were not compared together before they were committed to writing; and their very independence tells in favour of their authority.

VI. THE JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM: Luke ii. 1–6.

Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled [described, *Wyc.*; valued, *Tyn.*; taxed, *Gen.*]. This was the first enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria [justice of Syria, *Wyc.*; lieutenant in Syria, *Tyn.*, *Gen.*]. And all went to enrol themselves, every one to his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; to enrol him-

self with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child.

Of the routes from Galilee to Judæa: On this subject see, *e.g.*, Art. in Hastings' Ext. *Roads and Travel*; Thomson's *The Land and the Book*; and G. A. Smith's *Hist. Geog. of Holy Land.*

Not so many months earlier, in going to and returning from the hill country of Judæa, Mary had made this journey; and still more recently, Joseph, when he came from Bethlehem to fetch home his bride. It is possible that they took the route on the other side the Jordan, through Peræa, and thence by way of Jericho to Jerusalem. Peræa, like Galilee and Judæa, was peopled mostly by Jews,—the three regions were spoken of as Jewish provinces; and by this route Galilean pilgrims felt that they could go all the way on Jewish soil to the feasts at Jerusalem. It was in Peræa that our Lord met the Jewish doctors who tempted Him, the Jewish ruler who knew the law, and Jewish mothers who brought their children to Him, that He might lay His hands on them. But the way is long, and the passages over the Jordan not without difficulty. There were no bridges, the shallowest ford was three feet deep, the bottom very muddy, and baggage had to be floated over or carried on the heads of porters. It is true, that by this route Samaria was avoided; and to the Jew, the Samaritan was a "stranger." The ill feeling between the two peoples was conspicuous. And yet, according to rabbinical authority, the country, the waters, the dwellings, and the roads of the Samaritans were clean. Except for the hostility of the inhabitants, which may be described as ever active, there was no reason why

Lightfoot's *Horæ Heb.*, iii. 273.

a Jew should not travel through the country. St. John (iv. 9) adds to the question of the woman at the well the explanatory clause, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans"; and the fact is abundantly illustrated in the rabbinical writings: but the clause is omitted in some important manuscripts, and may have been a gloss by another hand. And the only man our Lord held up as an example was a Samaritan,—a heretic and a stranger; "Go, and do thou likewise." The antagonism was not such as to prevent travel. Josephus tells us positively, that "it was the custom of the Galileans, when they came to the holy city at the festivals, to take their journeys through the country of the Samaritans"; and he says that it was absolutely necessary for those who go quickly to Jerusalem to pass through that country: "for in that road you may, in three days' time, go from Galilee to Jerusalem." But for solitary or defenceless travellers the eastern route was safer. Josephus himself records an attack made upon Galileans by the inhabitants of a Samaritan village which led to the interference of the Roman authorities. And it is probable that at no time was the journey made except under escort or in a large company.

Antiq. XX. vi. 1.

Life, § 52.

Of the modes of travel.

But whichever route was taken by Joseph and Mary, it lay along roads very different from the thoroughfares made by Roman builders, and much less like modern roads with their fences, hedges, ditches, and in hilly regions ridges to guard against the damage done by rains. Often-

times the Palestinian road was little better than a track, perhaps without foundation of any kind ; on the other hand, on the hills, the hard limestone soil required little construction. The road ran as direct or straight as possible: neither hills nor streams were avoided, unless the crossing could not be made,—no small accomplishment in a country so uneven that the valleys, which more properly may be described as narrow, steep ravines or ditches, are rarely more than half a mile long. In the winter these deep furrows were swept by raging torrents: in the summer they were hot and dry. Travel was done either on foot or on the back of mule or ass. For women and children waggons drawn by oxen could be used on some roads. Litters and chariots were not unknown. Merchandise and luggage were carried in packs. When kings went on a journey, people were sent to prepare the roads, *e.g.*, filling up holes, removing loose stones, cutting down bushes, clearing the fords. No one travelled except for religious, military, commercial, or other necessary purpose: never for pleasure. Nor is it likely that scenery or history or art, which mean so much in modern times, was ever set against the inconveniencies and dangers of travelling. As the distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem is not more than eighty miles by the Samaritan route, and that for quick travelling at least three days were required, it is evident that ordinarily progress was slow. Victuals were generally carried by the traveller. The nights were spent either by the

roadside or in the village inns,—the chief advantage of the latter being shelter from storm and protection from robbers; and where also, except possibly at the more frequented stages of the journey, entertainment was given at the charge of the community. Hospitality has been always an Oriental virtue. Job says of himself: "The stranger did not lodge in the street; but I opened my doors to the traveller"; and it is said to the reproach of Gibeah, that on one occasion the people failed to take care of a man and his servant: "he went in, and sat him down in the street of the city: for there was no man that took them into his house to lodge." Our Lord refers to this duty in His description of the Last Judgement: "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in." Protection was more often needed than shelter. In those days Palestine was infested by highwaymen: even in the road between Jericho and Jerusalem, a traveller once fell among thieves; who not only stripped him, but left him half dead. In a rabbinical epigram, the solitary traveller is called a "son of death."

xxxi. 32.

Judges xix. 15.

Matt. xxv. 43.

Luke x. 30; Josephus, *Antig.* XIV. xv. 8; XVIII. ix. 1.

Preparations and precautions for the journey.

If our hypothesis be well grounded, it is next to certain that Joseph availed himself of every feasible convenience for the journey. We may go so far as to imagine that Mary was carried, if not in a litter, yet in a covered waggon or caravan; and that care was taken to avoid unnecessary fatigue. The reason for such was obvious. Nor do we doubt that they joined themselves to others who were making the same journey. During the taking of the census, the

roads would be livelier than usual, and robbers would ply their vocation more assiduously. Safety lay in numbers ; and possibly one of the services the Twelve Disciples did for the Lord Jesus was to accompany Him on His journeys during His ministry, if we may so put it, as a sort of body guard. At least no one supposes that He and they lived together in community all the year round ; but that they came into company only at given times, and for certain purposes and occasions. And yet under the most favourable circumstances, a journey meant privation, toil, and peril. In this instance of Joseph it also involved the severing of ties, leave-taking, and perhaps some disposition of affairs : for more than one purpose led to the journey. The immediate purpose, however, was the enrolment. The decree of Cæsar Augustus had to be obeyed.

Of the date of the Census : On this question, see Professor Sanday's article in Hastings' *Dict. Bib.*, ii. 646 ; and Sir W. M. Ramsay's "*Was Christ born in Bethlehem?*" with his articles in the *Expositor*, for Nov. and Dec. 1912.

Not till within the last few years has it been possible to solve the difficulties concerning the fact of this decree, and the date of this enrolment. There was no evidence known, or at least regarded as satisfactory, that before the death of Herod, 4 B.C., such an enrolment had been ordered ; though there is nothing improbable in the supposition that for the purposes of taxation or military service, the emperor should have ordered enrolments and valuations to be made from time to time throughout the empire. A Roman citizen was indeed exempt from taxation and a Jew from military service, but in

either case the exemption may have been secured only by registration. Indeed, Tacitus describes a state paper read before the senate soon after the funeral of Augustus, the whole of which was in the handwriting of Augustus, in which were set forth an estimate of the empire and its resources, the number of citizens, the allies of Rome, an account of the naval strength, the names of the conquered kingdoms and provinces, the subsidies and tributes, and the amount of the revenue, with the necessary disbursements of government, and the demands for secret service. Neither this document, nor the appointment by the emperor of twenty commissioners to collect the material for it, proves an imperial or universal census; and yet such an orderly and complete statement of the condition of the empire must have required scarcely less research and preparation. Augustus was a master of bureaucracy, and in accordance with his theory of government would naturally direct investigations, valuations, and enrolments. Only by such could he know either the strength of the empire or the exigencies of administration. The census or taxation spoken of by St. Luke did not therefore seem strange, even though the evidence in support of it was at fault or absent.

Annal., I. xi.

Of the succession of Legates in Syria.

According to St. Matthew, Christ was born during the reign of Herod the Great, and as Herod died 4 B.C., and as in the massacre of the Innocents the age of the Child whose death was desired was taken not to be greater than two years, and certainly not much less, or a lower

limit would have been set, it may be concluded that Christ was born before 6 B.C.: probably, as is now generally supposed, in 8 B.C., *i.e.* in the 35th year of Augustus, 745 A.U.C. It is known that Sentius Saturninus was governor or legate of Syria from 9 B.C. to 6 B.C.; and Tertullian speaks of the census in question as having been taken in Judæa by Sentius Saturninus. Tertullian's testimony has been found to have weight, though elsewhere he dates the birth of Christ at least three or four years later, in the 41st year of Augustus, *i.e.* 751 A.U.C. It is not clear whether he intended to correct St. Luke or obtained his information from some source unknown to the Evangelist. This Saturninus was one of the Roman judges who in the year 7 B.C. heard the charges of Herod the Great against his two sons. He was followed as governor of Syria in the July of 6 B.C. by Quintilius Varus, who was there during the disturbances that followed the death of Herod the Great, and probably remained till 3 B.C. The names of the next following legates are unknown, but in A.D. 6 Sulpicius Quirinius became governor, and continued in office till A.D. 9. It was about the time of his assumption of the legateship that Archelaus was banished, and Judæa placed in charge of a procurator under the jurisdiction of the governor of Syria.

Prof. Ramsay declares the evidence for this date, though scanty, is coherent and unequivocal. See also Mackinlay's *The Magi: how they recognised Christ's Star.*

Adv. Mar., iv. 19.

Adv. Jud., viii.

Jos. *Wars*, I. xxvii. 2.

The Census of A.D. 6–9.

No one questions that during the years Quirinius was governor of Syria, from A.D. 6 to A.D. 9, an enrolment or census was made. Josephus states that on the banishment of

Archelaus, Judæa being then added to Syria, Quirinius himself came into Judæa to take an account of the people's substance, and to dispose of Archelaus's money. The Jews generally consented to give an account of their estates, and submitted to the taxation. Insurrection, however, broke out, headed by one Judas, a Galilean, which, as both St. Luke and Josephus record, was suppressed, and the leader slain. *Antiq.* XVI. and XVIII.

The confusion involved in the dates of this Census and the Birth of Christ.

This enrolment or census, however, occurred some fourteen or fifteen years later than the one spoken of in the Gospel ; and it should be kept in mind that St. Luke knew of it, and, so far as we can gather, must have known of it when he declared in the Gospel, referring to the enrolment at the time of the Nativity, that [not the one of A.D. 6, but one of 8 B.C.] "this was the first enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria." But, as we have stated, Saturninus was governor of Syria in 8 B.C., and Varus after him. Until further information came to light many scholars were satisfied, and many more had an uneasy feeling, that either St. Matthew or St. Luke had made the mistake of setting the time of the Nativity some years before the death of Herod the Great, or ten years after that event. Had St. Luke been a secular historian it is not so certain that his testimony would have been denied, though it might have been disputed. And yet it was possible, though he was an evangelist, that he had preserved a fact which some day might be clearly proved and explained. At all events, his statement was not

challenged by such opponents of Christianity as Celsus or Porphyry,—two of the most acute and virulent critics of early times.

After some centuries of dispute the difficulty has been set at rest.

The difficulty has been happily and conclusively removed after many years of patient research by Sir William M. Ramsay. By the help of a recently-discovered inscription, and a remarkable knowledge of the times, countries, and conditions involved, this scholar has been able to confirm hints and conjectures indulged in by himself and others, that Quirinius was twice legate of Syria, and twice supervised the enrolment in that province of the empire. The hypothesis that the inscription on a fragment of a sepulchre found in the Tiber, and now in the Vatican museum, which states that the person to whom it was dedicated was twice legate of Syria and Phœnicia, referred to Quirinius, is now shown not to have been unlikely. An inscription at Antioch referred to by Professor Ramsay proves beyond dispute that Quirinius was duumvir or chief magistrate of Antioch, and one named Gaius Caristanius was his prefect, to act for him, and for his fellow duumvir,—sometime between 10 B.C. and 7 B.C. On the base of the monument which contained this inscription was a statue to the memory of Caristanius, the first one erected in the colony at the expense of the colonial government.

Publius Sulpicius Quirinius.

According to Tacitus, Quirinius, on his death in A.D. 21, at the request of Tiberius, was accorded a public funeral ; but his sordid avarice and unforgiving disposition left a stain upon his

memory that all his services to the state could not remove. He had distinguished himself by his military successes, and possessed considerable talents for business; and, notwithstanding his humble origin, he was raised by Cæsar Augustus to the honour of the consulship. No bar stood in the way of advancement of this able and energetic, though hard and unloveable, soldier. His consulship ended in 12 B.C., and the next year he took command of the expedition sent to punish the Homonades, who in 25 B.C. had slain Amyntas, king of the Galatæ, thus bringing about the formation of his kingdom into the province of Galatia. Quirinius had previously distinguished himself by subduing the Garamantes, a north African people dwelling on the borders of the desert. He had now to carry on a difficult campaign among the mountains north of Cilicia; and the only troops at his disposal consisted of Syrian legions. The government of Syria, indeed, was responsible for the war; and three or four years seem to have been required for the subjugation and re-organization of the invaded country. During this time Quirinius was legate of Syria, in command of its resources, but, unable both to administer the affairs of the province and to direct the war, either Saturninus was appointed in 9 B.C. as co-legate to attend to the former duties, or Quirinius retained for a year longer such powers as were necessary for military purposes. At any rate, in the year 8 B.C. Quirinius and Saturninus were associated in the

governorship of Syria: the one having charge of its military affairs, and the other of its civil duties. About the same time Antioch showed its appreciation of Quirinius by electing him and Servilius as duumviri, Caristanius, as the inscription shows, being appointed as prefect, to discharge their duties. It is therefore possible that Tertullian was right, when he said that the enrolment in Judæa took place during the governorship of Saturninus, and St. Luke was also right, and nearer the mark, in stating it to have been during the governorship of Quirinius, for Quirinius was in military command, and household enrolment had to the Romans rather a military connexion. The confusion is thus removed. Writing a hundred and fifty years later than the birth of Christ, Justin Martyr three times asserts that our Lord was born during the governorship of Quirinius,—"as," addressing the emperor and senate of Rome, he says, "you can ascertain from the registers of the taxing made under Cyrenius, your first procurator in Judæa." But this only shows that Justin Martyr was familiar with the statement in the Gospel. He could not have known that the birth was recorded at Rome. The probability that it was so recorded is all the other way, and both his and Tertullian's assumptions on that point may be dismissed as simple daring; while he adds to the confusion by ascribing to Quirinius an office which in Judæa at that time did not exist, and which at no time did he hold.

Quirinius would have been forgotten but for the birth of a Child he probably never heard of.

It is not necessary to follow the fortunes of Quirinius. He whose abilities had been recognized by Augustus, one of the world's greatest statesmen and administrators, was likewise held in high esteem by Tiberius, an emperor who at least knew well how to manage affairs. Twice Quirinius governed Syria, and twice it fell to him to direct a census of that province. In A.D. 4 he went as tutor with Gaius Cæsar to the East, and two years later received his second appointment to Syria. It is possible that Quirinius was thus honoured the second time, among other reasons, because he understood the mind and temper of the peoples of the Syrian province, and therefore could better handle the business of the census, and the serious difficulties arising from the misconduct of Archelaus. Of his fellow-duumvir at Antioch, Servilius, a noble, and probably governor of Galatia at the time of the Homonadensian war, and therefore associated with Quirinius, it may be said that he was consul in A.D. 3, and that in A.D. 20, when Quirinius, after divorcing his high-born wife Æmilia Lepida, brought a charge against her, Servilius testified in justification of the suit. Both Quirinius and Servilius were at that time old men. It should be noticed, however, that St. Luke does not say that Christ was born during the consulship of Quirinius, but at the time of the taking of the census which was ordered by Quirinius.

Augustus established a system of enrolments.

St. Luke speaks of the enrolment of 9 B.C. as being the first, implying that it was one in a series, of which the second came fourteen or

fifteen years later. We do not know that this periodicity was universal, but we do know that Augustus adopted and modified an institution of long standing in Egypt, and we have specimens of the actual census papers in Egypt extending from the third, A.D. 20, for more than two centuries. That which happened in Egypt there is reason to suppose took place regularly in Palestine and other provinces. Augustus arranged the census to be made every fourteen or fifteen years, beginning with the first year of his fully organized principate, 23 B.C. This made 9 B.C. the cycle-year, and the counting took place in 8 B.C. It was in this year that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, and Christ was born.

See Dr. Milligan's *Selections from the Greek Papyri*, pp. 44, 72.

Of the Roman and Jewish methods of taking the census.

According to the Roman method each person was enrolled or counted at his own actual residence, but the Roman policy was to consider the habits and traditions of the Eastern provinces, and to adapt its plans so as to produce the least possible disturbance. Among Oriental people the place of birth, the forefathers' home, had a deeper significance, perhaps, than among the people of the West. A man owed a duty there which was demanded nowhere else: and when he wandered therefrom he laid himself open to suspicion, and possibly to interruption. So in Israel, the ancient way of numbering the people was by tribes and families, and not by mere domicile. Thus in Egypt, in the second century, in accordance with custom, the prefect ordered every one to return to his own home in order to be enrolled. The same rule seems

to have obtained generally in the East,—the very opposite of our idea of a census. So contrary is it, indeed, that formerly much fault was found with the statement of St. Luke. His narrative was condemned as incongruous in this particular with fact and common sense. But the question has been disposed of, and St. Luke's credibility has been vindicated. In her wisdom, perhaps in her inability to do otherwise, Rome used among the ancient races and tribes of the East the bond of attachment to the original home; assenting thereby to the tradition that a man was bound to the place of his birth, and could only be a temporary sojourner elsewhere. To be registered, enrolled, or counted, he must go back where he belonged. And, therefore, as Joseph was of the house and lineage of David, he went up to the city of David, in Judæa, called Bethlehem. Mary journeyed with him for the same purpose, but whether because she was herself of the family of David, or because she was now Joseph's wife, need not occasion dispute.

By Jewish custom women were not required to attend the taking of the census.

The Roman law required that both husband and wife should be enrolled, but Jewish law had no such provision. Herod the Great, however, may have desired as close a compliance as possible with Roman custom, and, while observing the Jewish manner of making the taxation lists or the enumeration rolls according to tribes and families, and of registration at the ancestral home, he may have demanded, after the Roman system, the enrolment of the wife as well as of

the husband. But even so, nowhere in the civilized world would a woman in the condition of Mary be forced either to appear in public or to travel; and when we speak of condition, we must remember the advanced stage of that condition.

The census not sufficient reason for Mary's journey.

There would seem to have been some other reason than that of the census for the journey at this time of Mary to Bethlehem. It is probable that the journey took place in the autumn, when many pilgrims went up from Galilee to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Tabernacles,—the most popular of national festivals, and held before the first rains after summer. These rains begin to fall in November, and continue intermittently till March, and even into April. They cease in time for the Passover, and are soon followed by the hot, dry summer. Necessity observes no seasons; but short of such, no journey would be undertaken in the summer or in the winter. We may conclude, therefore, that it was in October when Joseph and Mary started for Bethlehem. Travel would be easier at that time of the year, and company possible; but even the added interest of a feast is not sufficient to account for Mary's journey. No intimation is given in the Gospel as to the place or occasion of the first meeting of Joseph and Mary. But, as we suppose, his home may have been in or near Bethlehem; and as Mary's connexion with Zacharias and Elisabeth may have led to frequent visits to the hill country of Judæa, possibly opportunity was thus provided for acquaintance.

Nor is it extravagant to conjecture, as we have already done, that the discovery which occasioned him so much perplexity may have been made when he went north to marry his betrothed, and to bring her back to his own home. The suggestion, if such were made, to remain in Nazareth till after the birth of the Child, may have been disturbed by an urgent summons to enrolment. Or, on the other hand, the journey may have been hastened in order that the Child could be born in the city of His family, at Bethlehem, and in Joseph's own house. That the people of Nazareth knew of Mary's condition, and treated her with neglect or contempt, so that she sought comfort in flight, is a gratuitous assumption, and is not supported by any hint of such knowledge or of such feeling in the days of our Lord's ministry. Whatever the reason for Mary's journey with Joseph to Judæa, this was not the one.

The indications are that Joseph lived in or near Bethlehem.

That Joseph's home was in Bethlehem, and that he purposed taking his wife to live there, may be impossible of proof, but it is certain that for over a year, and perhaps nearly two years, after the birth of Christ, the Holy Family remained at Bethlehem. On their return from Egypt, after the death of Herod, they purposed again settling there. This suggests that Joseph had some opportunities of livelihood more evident there than elsewhere. It is not improbable, that there he was among his own people, and had friends who would welcome and help him. Not so far away lived Zacharias and

Elisabeth, people of consequence, relations of Mary, and probably well known to him. He must have been a man of some worth, perhaps of some property, certainly of some respect, in this neighbourhood, to have been able to make an alliance with the family of a priest of rank and reputation.

Of the day of the Nativity of our Lord.

Though we assume that the journey to Judæa was made in the autumn,—Professor Ramsay says, "Any other time of the year seems definitely excluded,"—we admit the precariousness of the hypothesis. The Nativity has been supposed to have happened in the same season. But it is not clear that it immediately followed the journey. Joseph and Mary may have tarried some time in Jerusalem; and if the tradition be correct which makes the home of Zacharias and Elisabeth halfway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, they may have made a sojourn with them. The coincidence of the Nativity, however, with December 25th seems to have been first advanced by Hippolytus Romanus in the early part of the third century. Hippolytus corrected an earlier opinion of his, that the day in question was January 2nd, and decided upon Wednesday, December 25th, by an elaborate calculation, which first led him to fix on Friday, March 25th, as the day both of the Annunciation and of the Crucifixion. The Crucifixion doubtless happened not far from that day; but no evidence whatever can be discovered to indicate the day of the Annunciation.

However we are not called upon to enter into the intricacies of this calculation. That the calculation was made is sufficient proof that in the beginning of the third century, the day and month of the Nativity were unknown. "There are those," said Clemens Alexandrinus, writing about A.D. 194, "who have determined not only the year of our Lord's birth, but also the day; and they say that it took place in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus, and in the twenty-fifth day of Pachon." The twenty-fifth day of the month Pachon has been set down either as the eighteenth or nineteenth of April, or even as the twenty-ninth of May. Hippolytus maintained the year to have been the forty-fourth of Augustus [*i.e.* from the death of his uncle Julius Cæsar, 710 A.U.C., but the thirty-first from the battle of Actium, 723 A.U.C., as Dion Cassius and Rabbi Lightfoot reckoned], which corresponds with 754 A.U.C. and A.D. 1; and this date was followed by Dionysius Exiguus, writing about A.D. 527, to whom is due the computation now prevailing throughout the Christian world. It is indeed seven or eight years wrong; and even Tertullian and Clemens Alexandrinus, who both bring the date back three years, are still four or five years too late.

Stromata, I. xxi.

Horæ Heb., ii. 29.

The ecclesiastical observance of Dec. 25 of slow growth.

But the calculation of Hippolytus which set December 25th as the day of the Nativity, though it gradually displaced whatever other hypotheses there may have been, did not for a long time bring about the observance of the day as a festival. The Philocalian Calendar, drawn up at Rome

in the year 336, is the most ancient authority testifying to the observance of Christmas Day. From Rome, where it seems first to have been kept, it reached Antioch about 375, and Alexandria about 430. In Jerusalem it was unknown till later. The Eastern Churches, however, for long had observed the Feast of the Manifestations or the Epiphany, generally on January 6th, but in some places four days later. This festival is referred to by Clemens Alexandrinus early in the third century, and was intended to commemorate the birth of Christ, the adoration of the Magi, and the baptism of our Lord. But as Christmas was unobserved in the East, so was the Epiphany unnoticed in the West ; and yet by the end of the fourth century, both in the East and in the West, the Nativity was celebrated on some one day. This diversity of practice tends to the same conclusion as the calculations of Hippolytus, that the day and the month of the Nativity had been universally and irretrievably forgotten.

Other reasons than the calculation of Hippolytus may have led to the choice of Dec. 25.

There may have been other influences than that of Hippolytus which induced the Roman Church to decide on December 25. The Saturnalia, beginning December 17, and lasting some seven days, had long been observed at Rome as a sort of harvest-festival, and as a period of absolute relaxation and unrestrained merriment. It came near the winter solstice, when the sun had reached its lowest depth, and in that particular corresponded with similar festivals which from a remote antiquity had been held by many

races and nations. When Julius Cæsar became master of the Roman world in 46 B.C., he set upon the reformation of the calendar. The winter solstice at Rome then occurred on December 24, and it has been supposed that he meant the New Year to begin the next day; but, possibly to gratify the superstition of the Romans, he caused the first year of the reformed calendar to fall on the first day of the new moon, which in the year 45 B.C. occurred at Rome in the evening of January 1st. Nevertheless, though the civil year was made to begin at Rome on January 1st, as elsewhere it began on other days in the year, the first day of the sun's turning back from his journey to the south continued everywhere to be thought of with much interest. As soon as Mithraism became established in Rome, in the second and third centuries, it made December 25th the *Natalis Invicti*, the birthday of the Invincible One, the *Invictus* being the sun. Throughout the Latin world the worship of the Sun grew in popularity, and reached its height about the time that the Roman Church declared December 25 to be the birthday of Christ. "One is inclined to believe," says Mgr. Duchesne, "that the Roman Church made choice of the 25th of December in order to enter into rivalry with Mithraism." By the time Mithraism was prohibited, in A.D. 378, Christmas Day had firmly established itself in the West. The Church, realizing the coincidence of Hippolytus's calculation with the feast of the Sun-god, turned the thoughts of the people from a false deity to Him

Origines, Eng. Trans., p. 261.

who is the true Son of Righteousness. Moreover, if the ancient custom to which Horace referred prevailed as late as the second century of the Christian era, that on one day during the Saturnalia all slaves should be free,—"the freedom of December,"—no season could have been more appropriate in which to commemorate the birth of Him who came to redeem His people, many of whom were verily children of oppression, and to deliver them from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Sat., ii. 7.

The appointment of Christmas influenced other observances.

The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord being set for viii kal. jan., December 25th, it followed as a matter of course that the Nativity of John the Baptist should fall on viii kal. jul., June 24th, which coincided with the summer solstice, and again with many consequent customs. The Nativity also set the day for the Circumcision, January 1st, eight days later, and for the Purification, February 2nd, forty days after the birth. Interesting, however, as are the traditions and customs which clustered about these festivals, many of them doubtless transferred with but slight modifications from earlier pagan festivals and myths, no season became richer or more charming in such particulars than Christmas. As time went on, the origin of the observance of the Nativity was lost sight of, and no one disputed that the event happened exactly on December 25th.

There does not seem to have arisen any doubt on this point before the seventeenth century;

and then scholars such as Lightfoot entered upon calculations scarcely less elaborate than those of Hippolytus, and decided for the month of September, the season of the feast of Tabernacles being thought to agree excellently with the time of Christ's birth. Lightfoot was strengthened in this opinion by the supposition, which he regarded as fact, that the sheep of the wilderness were taken out to pasture about the time of the Passover, and were brought back before the first rain, which fell usually in the latter part of October or early part of November. This theory, that the sheep were out only from the spring to the autumn, led others to decide in favour of April as the true time. Edward Greswell made it highly probable that our Lord was born on the evening which began the fifth of April. "Before this time there would be abundance of grass in the pastures—the spring rains being over: but much after it, and till the autumnal equinox again, the pastures would be comparatively bare." So, centuries earlier, Clemens Alexandrinus says that the Basilidian heretics asserted that Christ was born on the 24th or 25th of the Egyptian month Pharmuthi, *i.e.* our April.

The dispute as to the day broke out in the seventeenth century.

Horæ Heb., ii. 32; iii. 36.

Dissertations, Vol. i. No. x.; referred to approvingly by Alford, *Gk. Test.*, iii. 457.

Stromata, I. xxi.

But, admitting that the reckonings of both Hippolytus and Lightfoot may be at fault, and really serve only to show that the day and the month were lost in the earliest times, it is not certain that in the latter part of December the climate of Judæa is so cold, wet, and disagreeable, that shepherds could not have watched

The deduction from climate not to be urged.

Jesus the Messiah, i. 187.

their sheep in the fields through the night. Indeed Edersheim has shown that December is not the most inhospitable month in Palestine, and has adduced evidence which tends to prove that the sheep over which these shepherds watched were intended for the Temple sacrifices, and that these flocks lay out in the field all the year round.

The exact day not of first importance.

It is evident that with the day of the Nativity unknown, it is not easy to determine the season of the year in which the journey was undertaken, especially if the Nativity followed immediately. After all, the actual day of the event commemorated is not of great consequence. The fact that Christ was born is sufficient for us to know: the time and the place of the incidents associated with the fact need not perplex us. Nevertheless, one cannot help thinking that there is something to be said in favour of December 25th; while the associations of that season make it peculiarly fitting, if not for the event itself, then at least for its celebration. Thus, notwithstanding the uncertainty, and all that can be alleged against such an opinion, one loves to picture the pilgrims from Nazareth arriving at Bethlehem in the night that was longest,—perhaps, if you will, when the snow lay on the ground.

Of the historical associations of Bethlehem.

Of the place of the Nativity there does not appear ever to have been any doubt. The village which was known particularly as David's town had the honour of being the birthplace

of the Messiah. Originally called Ephrath or Ephratah, probably after some person of that name who had settled there, Bethlehem was not known by its present name till after the conquest of Canaan, the time of the Judges, and later, it was called Bethlehem Judah, perhaps to distinguish it from a place of the same name in Zebulon. But a little way from Ephrath, which a gloss in Genesis xlviii. 7 states is Bethlehem, Benjamin was born, and Jacob buried Rachel. Tradition has set the tomb of Rachel in a place called Ramah, which if correct would go somewhat towards explaining the reference in Jeremiah xxxi. 15: "lamentation and bitter weeping," as Rachel, figure of the distressed nation, saw the long train of captive exiles on their way to Babylon, her children who were not,—grief so terrible that the voice of it is represented as being heard as far as Ramah: either the Ramah five miles north of Jerusalem, or this Ramah, four miles to the south. "They shall come again from the land of the enemy," said the Lord; but she refused to be comforted. Grief like unto this is recorded of the mothers in the massacre of the Innocents. The name Ramah is attached to many places all over the country, but the heap of rubbish about four hundred yards from the Saracenic mausoleum known as Rachel's Tomb may possibly have been a Ramah. There is nothing improbable in the conjecture that such a hamlet was near to Bethlehem, and may have come to be considered even a part of the larger village. Bethlehem itself owes its

E.g. Gen. xxxv. 16, 19.

Judges xvii. 7.

Josh. xix. 15.

On this point see Prof. Driver's *Commentary on Genesis*, p. 311.

comparative obscurity to its isolated position: it never rose to any eminence, or became remarkable for its dignity, prosperity, or influence. A charming picture of its life and customs, pastoral and idyllic, is given in the Book of Ruth. Thence, driven by famine, Elimelech and his two sons, "Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah," went to Moab; and here Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, and godfearing withal, married Ruth, the people of the town assembling in the gate, and giving him the blessing, "Do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem."

The birthplace and home of David.

Of the grandson of Boaz and Ruth was born David, "the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-judah, whose name was Jesse"; and in this place, to the astonishment of Jesse and his other sons, Samuel anointed David, "and the Spirit of Jahveh came upon David from that day forward." But though David spent his youth here, after he became king he does not seem to have shown his birthplace any singular favour. And yet at a critical moment, in the days of his wanderings, when the Philistines had an outpost in Bethlehem, he longed to refresh himself with its water: "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" Nor should it be forgotten, that as David, the keeper of sheep, killed Goliath, the giant of Gath, another man from the same village, Elhanan, the son of Jair the Bethlemite, slew Lahmi, a brother of this same Goliath; and it was Jonathan, David's own nephew, who destroyed another brother of

1 Sam. xvii. 12; xvi. 13.

2 Sam. xxiii. 15.

2 Sam. xxi. 19, 20; 1 Chron. xx. 5, 6.

Goliath, a fierce and monstrous warrior. Another of David's nephews, Asahel, the youngest son of Zeruiah, David's sister, famous for his swiftness of foot, and one of David's thirty heroes, was buried here. Nor may we forget Joab, another son of Zeruiah, without whose military genius and loyalty it is not too much to say that the house of David would not have secured the throne. These men and their deeds of valour were sufficient to make the village famous. It was even thought of as a place for the tabernacle, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob: "Lo, we heard that it was at Ephratah." Rehoboam made it one of his fenced cities: "he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine. In every city he put shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong." But for all this, the town failed to attain to more than temporary importance. Legend made it for a time the refuge of the prophet Isaiah, but the lawlessness for which he had fled from Jerusalem had its like there, and he settled for two years in a desert place near by; moreover there lived at Bethlehem a false prophet. The murderers of Gedaliah, governor of Judah, after the deposition of king Zedekiah, took shelter there; and the prophet Micah speaks of the place as "little among the thousands of Judah." It has been often observed, that Bethlehem is never mentioned as having been visited by our Lord or in any way associated with His ministry. But all Christian

Ps. cxxxii. 6.

2 Chron. xi. 11.

Martyrdom of Isaiah: ii. 7, 11; iii. 1; written in the first Christian century.

Jer. xli. 17.

history and tradition maintain that He was born there. When some of the multitude, convinced by His teaching, said, "This is the Christ," others, regarding him only as a Galilean, said, "What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

Of the town of Bethlehem.

See, *e.g.*, Thomson's *The Land and the Book*, p. 644; Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 231, 526; Canon Tristrim in *Picturesque Palestine*, p. 121; Geikie's *Holy Land*, p. 405. Also the Bible Dictionaries.

Bethlehem is situate on the narrow ridge of a long grey hill, five or six miles to the south of Jerusalem, and, with the exception of the walls, which since the days of the Crusades have crumbled away, practically follows the lines of the ancient town. Abrupt and irregular breaks in the hill and its straitened summit prevent expansion: the one narrow street running along the crest, with its dark alleys winding down on either side. The population is said to be about 8000: mostly Christian and fairly prosperous. Their houses architecturally are probably much as they were in David's time: built largely of limestone, and in the lower parts often shared with the cattle or beasts of burden. The place is now known as Beit-lahm, "the house of flesh," a phonetic accommodation of Bethlehem, "the house of bread"; both names being expressive of the fertility of the neighbourhood and the resources of the town. In the terraces on the hillsides are oliveyards and vineyards, fig-trees, pomegranates, and almonds, cultivated and luxuriant; the fields to the east produce wheat and barley, as in the days of Boaz; and here and there abundant pasture is found for sheep

and goats. Forbidding as the dry, chalky hills may appear in the distance, and weary as may be the steep ascents to the town, the associations of the place give it a charm, and the prospects from the heights, in almost every direction attractive and picturesque, gratify the traveller. Necessarily the attention is directed to the great pile of buildings to the east, the Church of the Nativity, and the convents of Greek, Latin, and Armenian monks. But of these something will be said later on.

VII. THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST: Luke ii. 6-8.

And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The exigencies of the occasion.

The journey itself may have hastened the event to which Joseph and Mary had been looking forward: for it is scarcely to be supposed that the journey, even from Jerusalem, would have been undertaken had the event not been thought farther off. At first sight the language does not appear to involve the idea of suddenness. The narrative distinctly states, as though Joseph and Mary had been in the place some time, that "while they were there the days were accomplished"; also implying that the full period had been run. Perhaps they had been there but a few hours: apparently not long enough to make the needed preparations, or to

secure clothing for the Babe or a fitting place for the birth. Though Joseph may have had friends there, and even a house of his own, for some reason not told us, he was obliged to seek shelter at the inn. If we knew the reason, we should be able to explain the difficulty. It may have been too late in the evening to go anywhere but to the inn; or Joseph's friends may have been away; or the occupants of his house may have been unaccommodating. But whatever the reason, if Joseph endeavoured to find a lodging, one is surprised at the inhumanity whereby a woman in the condition of Mary was obliged to go to the inn.

There is little doubt that the birth took place in the stable.

Dr. W. M. Thomson, the author of *The Land and the Book*, and for thirty years a missionary in Syria and Palestine, advanced a conjecture which, if true, would dispose of some of the difficulties. "It is my impression that the birth actually took place in an ordinary house of some common peasant, and that the babe was laid in one of the mangers, such as are still found in the dwellings of the farmers in this region." The narrative does not say that while there was no room for them in the inn, that they went to the stable. Nor were mangers or cribs only in the stables of inns. Houses frequently had a chamber on a lower floor where the asses and oxen for the family use were kept. But the term καταλύματι, as used in the text, denotes a public inn, a place of reception for travellers. Had a room in a private house, a guest-chamber, been meant, the expression would have been

Land and Book, p. 645.

Alford, *Gk. Test.*, i. 457—*i.e.* instead of "there was no room for them *in the inn*," the passage would have

κατάλυμα. It is to be distinguished from πανδοχεῖον, in Luke x. 34, in not having a host, being nothing more than an enclosure where caravans could stop during the night, with a building for wayfaring folk to sleep in. Originally it simply indicated a resting place where animals were relieved of their packs [καταλύειν = to let down]. As to the term "manger," it is not certain that the Greek word φάτνη always means a crib or trough out of which animals get their fodder. Metonymically it may stand for a stall or chamber containing the manger, and thus for the stable itself. But no matter what the meaning of this word may be, the prevailing idea has been that the birth was in the stable of the khan.

read, "they found no κατάλυμα = not "inn," which they did find, but *room* or *chamber*: *cf.* Luke xxii. 11.

See Prof. Massie in Hastings' *Dict. Bib.*, iii. 234.

The inn to which Joseph and Mary betook themselves may have occupied the same site as the Inn or House of Chimham spoken of by Jeremiah. Four hundred years earlier, when David fled from Jerusalem, in the rebellion of Absalom, Barzillai, a loyal Gileadite, gave him as an attendant his son Chimham. After his return, the king may have fulfilled his promise by giving Chimham an inheritance in Bethlehem, and possibly Chimham built an inn or caravanserai there, for the convenience of travellers about to set out for the south. The size and character of the village indicate that in the time of our Lord it was a sorry refuge: an open space or yard, surrounded by arched recesses or sheds over which was a series of chambers reached by a stone stairway. Such was the usual khan of this

The Inn of Bethlehem.

Jer. xli. 17.

2 Sam. xix. 37; 1 Kings ii. 7.

kind. In these upper rooms wayfarers would have to content themselves for the night: muleteers, animals, and baggage occupying the alcoves below or the open yard. If the upper rooms were filled, the next comer would have to find his resting place in the recesses below. In this instance, there may have been a cave, either natural or excavated, in the rock or hillside immediately behind the khan, a stable, into which in winter time the cattle were driven, and perhaps under some circumstances for safety. There is nothing in such a caravanserai, save its use, to suggest the neat and hospitable inns of western Europe.

The Cave of the Nativity.

Tradition says that the birthplace at Bethlehem was a cave: a tradition some have thought suggested by the prophecy of Isaiah xxxiii. 16, "He shall dwell in a lofty cave" [LXX]. Justin Martyr, writing in the early part of the second century, not so long after the death of St. John, is the first to record the tradition of the cave: "When the Child was born in Bethlehem, since Joseph could not find a lodging in that village, he took up his quarters in a certain cave near the village; and while they were there Mary brought forth the Christ, and placed him in a manger, and here the Magi who came from Arabia found him." The apocryphal gospel known as the *Protoevangelium Jacobi*, written in the second or third century, also mentions a cave as the place of birth. St. Jerome, who lived at Bethlehem for the thirty-four years previous to A.D. 420, and whose study was a cave close to the cave of

Dia. Trypho., lxxviii.

§ 18: and tells a silly story in § 19.

the Nativity, refers frequently to the "cave in which the Son of God was born." He calls it "that venerable cave"; and says that "in the cave where Christ formerly cried as an infant, they used to mourn for the beloved of Venus." He states that, in his zeal to extirpate the remembrance of Christ, Hadrian built a grove to Adonis over the grotto,—which grove was cut down when the place was reconsecrated by Queen Helena. So Origen says, "There is shown at Bethlehem the cave where He was born, and the manger in the cave where He was wrapped in swaddling clothes." Even the enemies of the faith, he says, acknowledge "that in this cave was born that Jesus who is worshipped and reverenced by the Christians." About the year 326, Helena, the mother of Constantine, visited the cave; and soon pilgrimages there became more frequent than ever. Paula, a highborn, devout, and wealthy Roman lady, an enthusiastic student of sacred literature, a friend of St. Jerome, and a benefactor to the poor, giving her whole fortune to charitable enterprises, went to every place associated with our Lord's life of which she obtained information. Her remarkable tact, business ability, and scholarship did not affect her imagination. Having, says St. Jerome, "entered Bethlehem, going into the cave of the Saviour, after seeing the sacred lodging of the Virgin and the stall . . . she solemnly affirmed in my presence that she saw with the eyes of faith the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, the Lord wailing in the manger, the Magi wor-

Epistles to Paulinus and Sabinianus.

Contra Celsum, i. 51.

See Jerome's *Epitaphium*, written in 404, and addressed to her daughter Eustochium: Ep. 108, ed. Vall. Referred to in *Dict. Chris. Biog.*, iv. 218; and *Chris. Ant.*, ii. 1636.

shipping, the star shining above, the virgin mother, the careful foster-father, the shepherds coming by night . . . the infants slain, Herod raging, Joseph and Mary fleeing into Egypt." Most appropriately Paula was laid to rest in the centre of the Cave of the Nativity. From those days the genuineness of the tradition of the cave has been popularly, for a thousand years universally, accepted. But it should be observed, that the tradition does not imply the cave to have been the stable of the inn. If, however, the stable was a cave, this cave was in all probability that stable.

The poverty of the khan at Bethlehem.

An inn such as that at Bethlehem, without a host, would have accommodation as free as it was meagre. The people of the neighbourhood brought food and water for sale to those who needed such. Here at nightfall, all sorts and conditions of travellers gathered, a rude, motley, noisy crowd,—probably the only place of public entertainment in the village ; and here every one had to look out for himself. During the enrolment, both village and inn would be filled with strangers. On the night of the Nativity, none of the sleeping chambers was vacant ; and, if Joseph and Mary arrived late, most of the travellers would be asleep. The only resting place available was some one of the recesses or alcoves beneath, the stable, or the cave used for a stable. It is possible that such a place may have been clean and tidy. But at this time of overcrowding, it was probably otherwise,—dismal, stifling, and offensive : a miserable shelter,

the last place that one would care to sleep in, dark, and depressing. A dim, smoking lamp revealed still more its unutterable wretchedness. Perhaps, as a woman was to rest there, some of the animals were taken out, and near a wall fresh straw was laid. Here the Virgin rested; and here was born the King of glory and the Saviour of men!

We are not told that any one assisted at the birth. Most likely help was soon secured for the Mother and Child; if otherwise, not so much because of poverty, but because of circumstances. An ancient tradition, fanciful, but sympathetic, says that He who came to take away suffering, even in His birth caused no pain. The narrative suggests that with her own hands, after the custom of the East, Mary wound swathes round and round the Babe, and that she herself laid Him in a manger, or, as Wycliffe calls it, a cracche [Genevan version, "cratche"]. The word "cratch" is now used dialectically of a rack, in old English a manger, to hold fodder for horses and cattle in a stable or cowshed. "Crib" has the same meaning. Probably because our Lord was laid in such, both words have come to signify a cradle,—and "cradle," as Professor Skeat tells us, is allied to "crate," a basket or receptacle made of wicker work, and, as its diminutive, means a "little crate." Thomson states, that in Palestine many inns or khans have caverns below them, where cattle are sheltered,—after the fashion, we may add, of the ground floor of Swiss chalets or farmhouses,—and where, built

The "manger" to be considered literally, and not to be taken as a "stall," or chamber in which the manger was set.

"Mid clutes biwrabbed." —*Ancren Riwle* (A.D. 1225), 260.

"From his cratch to his cross he suffered many a little death all his life long." —John Trapp (1656), on Matt. ii. 13.

along the wall, are stone mangers which "cleaned out and whitewashed as they often are in summer when not required for the animals, would make suitable cribs in which to lay little babies." He does not, however, as Professor Massie observes, say that he saw any little babies in them except his own. It is curious that St. Luke mentions only two of the many things that have to be done at such times; perhaps, because these two were departures from the usual habits: the one, in that either Mary did it herself, or that the bands were improvised for the occasion; the other, in the place where the Child was laid, no mother being willing to use a manger, no matter how clean, for such a purpose. The two acts probably were recorded to indicate the desperate straits to which Mary was that night unexpectedly driven.

Hast., *Dict. Bib.*, iii. 235.

The Legends and Lessons of Christmas Day.

Legend has dealt freely and poetically with this event, and round it and the day of its commemoration have clustered the kindliest feelings, the happiest associations, and the profoundest hopes. Age after age, our divines have exposed its lessons; our poets have told its story in verse; our novelists have illustrated its virtues, and made its spirit the strength and beauty of romance; and our folklorists have preserved the myths and described the customs which have grown out of the sacred narrative. Many of the pretty sayings, homely observances, and quaint conceits formerly common are now forgotten. The carol singers and the pealing bells are still heard, but kings no longer stand with

drawn swords at the reading of the Gospel, nor into our minds comes again the fancy that at the hour of the Nativity the bees awake from their winter sleep to utter their canticle of praise, and the oxen in the stall bend the knee as a sign of their homage to Him whose first bed was a manger. No herdsman now gives to his dog the name of the faithful companion who accompanied the shepherds of Bethlehem to the Saviour's side; no one sees in the Rosemary the flower of virtue and pleasantness, a spray of which hung upon the swaddling clothes of the Infant Redeemer. Yet, curiously enough, in the domestic circle still survives that mediæval invention, the Christmas tree, type manifold of the tree of the healing leaves which grows beside the crystal stream in Paradise, of the bush which burned before Moses in the wilderness, of the offspring of the Root of Jesse, and, when lighted with candles and laden with gifts, figure of Him who is the Light of the World, and who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. So, too, as the very trees of the wood clap their hands and exult before the Lord, and, as was foretold by Isaiah, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together should beautify the place of God's sanctuary, we bring into the House of the Lord the evergreen leaves,—the holly with its drops of red blood, symbolical of the Master's passion, and the ivy, representative of those faithful souls which for life and support entwine themselves, as it were, round the mightier soul of their Saviour Christ. So, again, in the arches of the

Isa. lx. 13.

rood-screen may be seen the bow of mercy, the spanning of the gulf which lay between God and man, the symbol of Him who is the true Pontifex Maximus,—the Most High Maker of the bridge across the river which divides earth from heaven, and life from death. Nor do we fail to see in the Cross high lifted up the exaltation of the Virgin's Son,—the symbol of salvation and reconciliation, and the means whereby men may sing with angels the hymn of everlasting peace.

And yet at the time the event was unheeded.

Be all this as it may, and no one cares to examine too closely into myths and stories so full of charm, that night, we can well believe, in the khan the travellers and their beasts slept on; the village near by lay silent and undisturbed; on countryside, town, and sea, night spread its peace; the cities of the world beyond the hills of Judæa, Rome herself, controller of nations and mistress of many lands, rested unconscious that an event endless and limitless in its consequences had happened in an outhouse in an obscure Jewish village. No one knew that not only had a Child been born who should take the sceptre from Cæsar, and create a kingdom more splendid and more enduring than earth had ever known, but that God had come to dwell with men, and to redeem them from sin and death.

The Church of the Nativity.

Over the cave or grotto, the stable of the inn where was the manger in which for a while the Saviour of the world lay, the devout and imaginative mother of Constantine the Great built a church, to which pilgrims might go and revere

the place of so stupendous a mystery. Greater and richer buildings have been erected round that early sanctuary,—in all probability, says Dean Stanley, the most ancient monument of Christian architecture in the world. Underneath is the vault excavated out of the limestone rock on which Bethlehem stands, and in one of its two small recesses a marble slab marks the supposed spot of the Nativity. In the other recess is said to have been discovered the wooden manger, now deposited in the Church of S. Maria Maggiore at Rome. Certainty is impossible, and there is much to be said against the identification of this site, but the belief of more than sixteen hundred years is deserving of respect, though it cannot secure acquiescence.

Sinai and Palestine, p. 528.

The Legends of the Birth of Gautama the Buddha.

They who are familiar with Buddhist legends of the birth of Gautama will see in them a likeness to this story of the birth of Jesus. It has even been supposed, either that the writers of the Gospels had some knowledge of these legends, or that into the traditions they gathered had come fragments or suggestions from these legends. In other words, St. Luke, unconsciously of course, has incorporated into his narrative stories which belong not to Jesus, but to Gautama, who lived some five hundred years earlier. Were this true, of necessity his account would be worthless. It may be of interest to look into this charge. By the third century before Christ, Buddhism had divided into two parts, between which there has been since little or no intercom-

munication. The sacred books of the southern Buddhists are in Pāli, and contain the oldest of the traditions; those of the northern Buddhists are in Sanskrit, and are related to the earlier books much as the apocryphal gospels are related to the New Testament. The southern canon was determined about 250 B.C., and the northern near the beginning of the Christian era. The books themselves of course are much older, and being of various dates, development may be easily traced. To the latter canon belongs the *Lalita Vistara*, in which the legends concerning the birth and youth of Gautama appear developed and enlarged beyond anything to be found in the Pāli books. While undoubtedly of great age, it is impossible to prove that it has come down without additions or alterations. The claim that its form of the legends and the legends which are peculiar to it are pre-Christian cannot be maintained. No text of it is known earlier than a translation into Chinese, which is said by some authorities to have been made in A.D. 65, and by others as late as the third century. The former date rests solely on the assumption, which has no support but a very late tradition, that it was among the books brought back from India by a Chinese mission, which had gone there to examine the claims of Buddhism. It is therefore not so certain that the traditions peculiar to the *Lalita Vistara* were in existence before the Christian era; or that they were written till after the Gospels had assumed their present form. It is quite as likely, indeed much

Pfleiderer, *Early Christian Conceptions of Christ*, pp. 35, 43. He quotes from Foucaux, who in turn uses Stanislas Julien (p. xvii of the translation from the Tibetan, 1848), and Julien depends upon a tradition, of which he gives no date, to support the conjecture that the translation into Chinese was made between A.D. 70 and 76. De Pressensé, *Ancient World and Christianity*, p. 226, seems also to have taken Foucaux as authority for the early date of *Lalita Vistara*. On the whole subject see arts. in

more so, that the Christian Gospels affected its compilation, as that the Evangelists were influenced by the stories it preserved. As to traditions, they were as apt to be carried from western Asia to India, as from India to western Asia; and had the latter been the course of the Nativity legends, it is difficult indeed to account for their penetration of the barrier both Jew and Christian had built up against all things pagan.

Ency. Brit., "Buddhism," and in Hastings' *Ency. of Rel.*, ii., "Bodhisattva and Buddha."

Nevertheless, though, to quote the *Encyclopædia of Religion*, "the story of the virginity of Māyā, the mother of the Buddha, is late, and owes its inspiration, it can hardly be doubted, to Christian sources," yet the similarity and the beauty of the legend of the birth of Gautama are such that the summary thereof given by Professor Pfleiderer from Foucaux's translation of the *Lalita Vistara* is worthy of quotation. The queen Māyā had had a dream, "during her fast in the spring time,"—the traditional time of the Annunciation to Mary,—and her husband, King Suddhodana of Kapilavastu, asked of the augurs an interpretation.

The *Lalita Vistara* on the Nativity of Gautama. Pfleiderer, pp. 39–41. *Ency. of Rel.*, ii. 881.

"These prophesied that great gladness was about to come to them, for the queen would bear a son, who would be either a mighty ruler or a perfect saint, a Buddha and Saviour of the world. When after ten months she had brought forth her son in a birth painless and undefiled, the newborn child at once cried out with the voice of a lion:—'I am the noblest, the best thing in the world! This is my last birth; I will put an end

to birth, to old age, to sickness, to death!' At this instant the earth quaked and heavenly music was heard, a supernatural light filled all quarters of the universe and put darkness to flight. All creation was filled with the highest ecstasy of joy, and was delivered from all the bonds of passion and ignorance; the pain of the diseased was relieved, hunger and thirst ceased, the drunkards became sober, the insane came to a right mind, the blind saw, the deaf heard, the maimed were made whole, the poor became rich, the bound were set at liberty, the sufferings of every creature, even of those in hell, came to an end. Then came the hosts of the gods and spirits of heaven, and paid homage to the Buddha-child and his mother, offering gifts, costly spices, garments and ornaments; the highest of the gods appeared in the form of young Brahmins, and uplifted a psalm of praise:—

Lalita Vistara, I. 78–88.

"'Happy is the whole world, for he is really born—he who brings salvation, the restorer of peace on earth. He has appeared who by the glory of his merit will dim sun and moon, and chase darkness utterly away. The blind see, the deaf hear, the deranged come to reason. The vice inherent in nature no longer vexes and disturbs, for the whole universe is full of good will. Gods and men can from henceforth approach one another without enmity, for he is the leader of their pilgrimage.'"

The song of the Brahmins is not to be compared with the song of the angels; but no words could better set forth the mission of Him who was indeed the Saviour of the world, and the Mediator between God and man.

VIII. THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS: Luke ii. 8–14.

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the fields and keeping watch by night over their flock [waking and keeping the watches of the night on their flock, *Wyc.*]. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory [clearness, *Wyc.*; brightness, *Tyn.*] of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you [to us, *Wyc.*] this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you; Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.

For their devotion, the Lowly are accepted as worthy of divine revelation.

In all literature this is one of the most charming stories. They who question it, on the ground that angels do not exist, or, if they exist, do not appear to men, may be left to prove either their hypothesis, or the fabrication of the story. The angel who spoke to the shepherds may have been that same Gabriel who stood before Zacharias and the Blessed Virgin; and it may have been, that had there been other people present, none but the shepherds could have seen the messenger or heard the message. We do not know: only, as in other instances of angelic appearances, we feel that more than physical qualities were needed. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and unless spiritual power

Cf. Dan. x. 7: "I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision." See *ante*, p. 154; *Glory after the Passion*, pp. 124, 161, 203.

is there, the angel comes in vain. Nor can we tell the number of the shepherds. Probably not more than two or three ; and they may have been talking on subjects which naturally would bring their minds into a condition conducive to such a vision. Notwithstanding that the patriarchs had been keepers of flocks, that David had watched his sheep in these very fields, and that Hebrew literature abounded in metaphors drawn from the pastoral life, it is true that at this time the occupation of a shepherd was looked upon with contempt. Except for poetical and homiletical purposes, even now it is not exalted among callings. According to the Talmud, the testimony of shepherds was not admitted in courts of law, and they were classed with heathens,—perhaps because their occupation kept them from public religious duties. Like the Egyptians in the days of Joseph, and anticipating modern custom, people of a higher grade in life avoided too familiar intercourse with men whose employment did not involve refined manners, or more than common intelligence. More significant, then, appears this Annunciation of the birth of Christ first to men of a station in life thought to be among the least honourable; and most fitting was it that He who should be pre-eminently the Good Shepherd should be thus heralded to the men in the fields at Bethlehem. But, on the other hand, it may have chanced that these shepherds were superior to their class. If their sheep were intended, not for the markets, but for the Temple sacrifices, they may have been

So Edersheim concludes: *Jesus the Messiah*, i. 186.

led to think of that purpose, and its meaning. The traditions and the doctrines which underlay the symbolism could not have been entirely unknown to them; and the more they thought thereon, the nearer, perhaps, they came to the realization of their own personal interest in that purpose. One can imagine, notwithstanding the popular prejudice against men rude and untaught as they were, comparatively speaking, that their reflections had fostered in them a devotion to the God of their fathers, and a longing for freedom from the sins of which their conscience accused them.

The Glory in the Heavens.

This seems next to certain, first, from the nature of the vision, and, secondly, from the words of the angel. Not only did an angel of the Lord stand by them, but the glory of the Lord encircled them. This glory of the Lord was none other than the Shechinah, the cloud of brightness, which symbolized the Divine presence, and as such appeared, *e.g.*, in the wilderness, at Mount Sinai, over the tabernacle, and in the temple, manifesting itself ever and anon between the cherubim in the holy of holies. The Shechinah was Israel's most precious blessing. After the building of the temple, it was seen chiefly in its most sacred chamber, lighting up the thick darkness; and only in one other place did it come, not to be seen, but to impart assurance and comfort, namely, in the sick room of a devout Israelite. He who died in the faith and peace of Jahveh passed immediately out of the darkness of this

world into the very glory and presence of God. No wonder when this cloud of brightness, sacred by so many wonderful associations, and betokening the actual nearness of God, shone round about the shepherds, that they were "sore afraid,"—that, as Wycliffe puts it, "thei dredden with greet drede." Thus had God manifested Himself to Moses, to Solomon, to Isaiah, and to others of the holy men of Israel; this, too, might be the blessed privilege of the high priest, when, in solemn service, he passed beyond the veils; but no one had ever heard of so great favour to men of such low degree. True, Moses was keeping Jethro's flock in the wilderness when he saw the bush which burned without being consumed, but Moses had been brought up by Pharaoh's daughter, and was destined to be the deliverer and lawgiver of Israel. And yet we cannot suppose that these men would have been so honoured, or have been capable of beholding so wonderful a vision, had they not been godfearing and earnest believers.

The Message of the Angel.

The words of the messenger of Jahveh tend to the same conclusion. The good tidings of great joy were brought particularly to these shepherds. From among the people, *i.e.*, of Israel, they were selected to hear the glad news; and it is expressly said that the Saviour was born *unto them*,—not, of course, exclusively, but as though they were ardently interested in Him, and, like the aged Simeon, were among those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel. The title

of Saviour, given to the newly-born Babe, is more commonly used, like the word "salvation," by St. Luke and St. Paul than by the other writers of the New Testament. Undoubtedly the Evangelist intends it to be understood, that the salvation to be wrought by this Saviour is salvation from sin,—"He shall save His people from their sins"; not, be it remembered, from the burdens, inconveniences, or even tyrannies of this present life, but from sin itself, the source and strength of these evils, and the cause of alienation between God and man. Had these shepherds not realized the power and heinousness of sin, and prayed and wrought for freedom therefrom, they had scarcely appreciated the message of the angel. It would not have meant anything to them merely to hear that a Saviour had been born.

The dignity and authority of the Saviour.

This Saviour is declared to be Christ the Lord; and though the word "Lord" (*κύριος*) is frequently used as a mere title of distinction or authority, here it does not seem possible to take it as other than corresponding to the Hebrew "Jahveh,"—the ineffable name of Deity: Messiah-Jahveh. He is *born* the Anointed of Jahveh, and *not afterwards made such*. The words do not affirm His deity, though they may imply it; and the shepherds probably did not understand their significance. St. Paul, however, took the words in this sense: "We preach Christ Jesus the Lord,"—Jesus, the Messiah-Jahveh; and again, "No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." That the Child born

2 Cor. iv. 5; 1 Cor. xii. 3.

of Mary and named Jesus should at the time of His birth be called Christ the Lord, and thus at the outset be identified with the long-expected Messiah, is of serious importance. It at once disposes of the theory that Jesus and Christ were two distinct persons; and it shows that He came into the world already anointed as Prophet, Priest, and King,—the offices of Messiahship,—and that those graces, gifts, and abilities which were necessary for their exercise were not at a later time to be bestowed upon Him, though they might be manifested in further development, but from the first were inherently and potentially in Him. Not only for the shepherds did the angel utter these words, but also for those who afterwards should believe in His name, that they should know that He was *born* their Saviour and King; and that as such, He is, as no one else has been, or can ever be, the Son of God.

The Sign by which the Shepherds should know the truth of the message.

In the sign given, it should be observed that the angel does not say that the shepherds shall find *the* Child, but *a* child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. The words confirm the suggestion already made, that something exceptional appears both in the clothes and in the place. Otherwise the conditions would not have furnished any evidence of the truth of the angel's message.

The Song of the Angels.

The words were hardly spoken, when overhead appeared a multitude of the heavenly host,—of heavenly knighthood, as Wycliffe translates, or of heavenly soldiers, according to

Tyndale: the Sabaoth, as in the title "the Lord God of Sabaoth," of hosts,—that vast and invincible army of powers and principalities, ever ready to do God's service, spoken of by Isaiah and St. Paul, and referred to in the Te Deum. These bright-robed warriors appeared, not with swords to keep men back from the tree of life, but to sing, as none but they of heaven can sing, of reconciliation, joy, and peace. Though, possibly, at the time none but the shepherds heard their anthem, yet through the ages since its grace and charm have come ever living to all believing and loving hearts. Its strain can never die; its message can never be forgotten.

The Structure of the Hymn.

The familiar arrangement of the hymn is threefold:

> "Glory to God in the highest,
> And on earth peace,
> Good will among men."

But a twofold structure has been proposed:

> "Glory to God in the highest and upon earth:
> Peace among men of good will,"—

By Olshausen and Dr. Hort: see an article by the Warden of Keble College in the *Saturday Review*, Dec. 23, 1911.

or, as the R.V. renders the second part of the message, "Peace among men in whom he is well pleased." According to this latter interpretation, Dr. Walter Lock, Warden of Keble College, remarks that the message is more than one of mutual good will among men. "It implies three great truths: that God should be honoured on earth as well as in the highest; that humanity is the object of His divine favour and blessing; but that human character must

be such as to win that favour and blessing." If the reading can be maintained, this is an analysis of the angels' song as helpful as it is beautiful.

Of the reading "good will."

And this should be noted; that the four oldest uncials have *εὐδοκία*, good pleasure or kindness, in the genitive, *εὐδοκίας*, and thereby the reading is obtained: "Peace among men of good will." There is no exact analogy elsewhere to this word, but a clue appears in the same Gospel: "Thou art my beloved Son: in thee I am well pleased," *ηὐδόκησα*: so that the R.V. is justified in its translation. The Latin versions and the Latin fathers maintain the same reading which the four great uncials have, as do all the translations based upon them: *e.g.* the Gothic (A.D. 360), the Anglo-Saxon (A.D. 995), and Wycliffe's (A.D. 1389). But all other manuscripts known, whether uncial or cursive, all versions that are not of Latin origin, and nearly all the Greek fathers have *εὐδοκία* in the nominative. The text which Tyndale used in his translation, A.D. 1526, and which was followed in the A.V., may have been faulty, but in this particular it had Greek instead of Latin authority: "peace on the erth," says Tyndale, "and vnto men reioysynge." The R.V. inserts in the margin the reading "men of good pleasure," and gives in the text, "peace among men in whom he is well pleased," thus adopting without qualification the disputed text in the genitive. This rendering, however, saves *εὐδοκίας* from being taken as a quality possessed by man: it is not man who has pleasure in God, but God

Dr. Walter Lock, *ut supra*.

who has pleasure in man. This is to restrict "peace" to some and to deny it to others, for it may not be understood that God is well pleased in all men. Indeed, it may be questioned, if, so long as man remains unresistingly in sin, God can be in any sense pleased with him. Yet the spirit of the angels' song that night over the fields of Bethlehem seems to be one of universal peace, irrespective of qualification,—a message from heaven to all the dwellers on earth: glad tidings to all men from Him who so loved the world as to give His Son for its salvation.

In another direction, the Vulgate is as far from an accurate rendering of the text, in both cases the reading being εὐδοκίας, as is the R.V.: "Pax in terra hominibus bonæ voluntatis." But, as the terms have come to be understood, *bonæ voluntatis* can scarcely be regarded as the equivalent of εὐδοκίας. The Greek word does not refer to "will" in the sense of purpose or choice; or in any way as denoting man's free volition. Some controversialists have argued from this translation the freedom of the will: "peace on earth for those that like it." But the efficient cause of the Incarnation was not man's desire for God, but God's desire for man. Except as God taught him, he knew nothing of God. Nor do we think that God's gift depends upon man's choice. As the rain falls upon the just and upon the unjust, so peace comes alike to those who long for it, and to those who give it no thought whatever. It seems better to interpret the angels' song to mean God's gracious and

The pre-Reformation versions, following the Vulgate, use "good will" in the now obsolete sense of virtuous, pious, or upright disposition or intention (*Oxf. Eng. Dict.*): "peace towards men of pure character."

"Good will" is commonly and correctly here understood, when used in the nominative, to mean God's kindly feeling, favour, loving intention, best wishes towards man.

unconditional offer of peace to a world that may or may not have realized its need of peace. The gift would be of God's love ; the rejection would be man's sin. So reads the Genevan marginal note in this place, as explanatory of the last clause of the hymn: "The free mercy and good will of God, which is the fountain of our peace and felicity."

Further evidence in favour of the familiar rendering of the text.

While, then, there is something to be said for the reading "men of good will," the more popular reading "good will to men" appears to have the stronger claim. The four uncial manuscripts which give the former reading are of great authority ; but they are not of conclusive authority. The fact that no other manuscript of the hundreds that have come down to us has this reading, is evidence that they were not copied from any one of the four uncials. Their originals may have been much older ; and this probability is strengthened by the commentary of Ephraem the Syrian (d. A.D. *cir.* 373) on Tatian's Diatessaron (a Harmony of the Gospels written in Syriac, about A.D. 170). Ephraem's quotation from the Diatessaron only gives the first two clauses of the Angelic Song, "Gloria in excelsis Deo, et pax in terra," but he paraphrases all three clauses, and the third paraphrase is, "et iis qui rei erant spes et remissio," —"and to those who were guilty hope and remission." This can hardly correspond to any other reading than "good will to men." If so, we have evidence in favour of this reading much older than any known manuscript of the Gospels.

Expositor, Sec. Ser. ii. 198 ; *Dict. of Christ. Biog.*, art. "Tatian."

Probably instead of "towards" we should read "among"; and yet the old translators may have been nearer the truth in their rendering than we should be in our literalism. The good will is not so much from man to man, or among men, but from God to man.

The actual words used by the Angels unknown.

After all, however, it is certain that no one knows the exact words of the Angelic Hymn. They were not Greek, for the shepherds doubtless knew no language but their own native Aramaic. Nor may the angels have used any earthly speech. The shepherds heard only voices of wondrous sweetness uniting in heavenly melody. Whatever the shepherds who frequented distant pasture-lands may have been, these we conclude were men of thought and devotion, and capable of spiritual influences. They interpreted the meaning of the hymn, not from words, but from the tones and notes of praise and love which fell upon their ears. Begotten by this concourse of glorious sounds, into their hearts came the assurance that in the birth of the Saviour-Child heaven itself was glad, and for earth God had only peace and good will. The anthem made them feel the peace and realize the good will. Thus, clearer than language itself could have taught them, they understood and interpreted the song of the heralds: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

IX. THE SHEPHERDS FIND THE MESSIAH: Luke ii. 15–20.

And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.

And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.

The Search of the Shepherds.

The vision passed away, and again the heavens were silent. To the shepherds there occurred but one thing to do. They may have left some one of their number to look after the flock; the rest of them at once and with haste started for Bethlehem. Where in Bethlehem to look for the Child, they had not been told. The mention by the angel of a "manger" possibly suggested the khan, and thither they may have directly gone; but the word "found" (*ἀνεῦρον*) implies that the discovery was made after a search. They had met with difficulty. In the night time, and especially if, as some suppose, the shepherds were strangers to the town, Bethlehem would not have been easy to traverse. And even when the khan was reached, it took further time and effort to get to the cave or grotto which served as a stable,—that is, as we have suggested,

to the shelter for beasts of burden when the weather drove them in from the open yard, where ordinarily they passed the night.

Their faith confirmed.

On seeing the fulfilment of the sign given them by the angel, they not only were convinced of the truth of their vision, but they told their wondrous story. Doubtless other children had been born under similar circumstances, but this One they had been assured by the angel was the Messiah, the Lord, and therefore a Saviour. The hope of Israel was now in the process of fulfilment. Not that either they, or those who heard and wondered at their tidings, understood the full import of the angelic or any other revelation, or thought of more in the Child than that He was destined for an extraordinary career. None of them knew anything of incarnation. The truth which years later became plain to apostles and evangelists was hid from them. They saw only the glow of the early dawn: what the day should be, and what in it should be done, they could not so much as divine.

Their testimony probably questioned.

Indeed, it may be suspected that some among their hearers wondered, not at the things which were said, but that these men of the pasture-lands dared to say them. After all, while figures of beauty and significance may be taken from the pastoral life, townsfolk, even of so small a place as Bethlehem, and travellers or traders still less so, do not rely for their religious beliefs upon the testimony of shepherds. Some among them would question the reality of the vision. Even were it admitted that these men were

superior to shepherds in general, and observed the rites of religion as men who lived in the wilderness commonly did not, they were no judges of mysteries such as they spoke of, and were perhaps more susceptible than most people of hallucinations. At any rate, it is not unlikely that some unbelief awaited the shepherds' story; and again the question arises, as in the annunciation to Zacharias and to the Blessed Virgin, would they who doubted that story have seen the light and heard the voices, even had they been present with the shepherds in the field?

Cf. *ante*, p. 241.

No further mention of the Shepherds till Irenæus refers to them, about A.D. 185; *Against Heresies*, lib. iv. cap. vii. § 1.

Perhaps this may account for the fact, at least partly, that no allusion is made later in the Gospels to this story. Thirty years or more went by before Christ entered upon His ministry, and though it is probable that Zacharias was dead and that the Blessed Virgin reasonably kept silence, yet this revelation to the shepherds must have been known to many others; but beyond this record no use was ever made of it. Is it too much to suppose that doubt and discredit led to its being forgotten, or at least set aside as a negligible tradition? Possibly this supposition underlies the use of the word "but" in the nineteenth verse: they who heard simply wondered, and dismissed the story as incredible, *but* Mary treasured all these sayings, pondering them in her heart,—failing to understand them, and yet believing there was truth in them.

The authority for these stories could scarcely be other than Mary herself.

It is from the Blessed Virgin that the tradition of the three angelic appearances seems to have come. Certainly none but she could have told

her own experience ; and the language implies that she preserved the memory of the shepherds' vision. After the death of Zacharias and Elisabeth, she alone preserved the memory of the vision in the temple; for we may reasonably suppose that either the priest or his wife told her of it. If this be so, then it is fairly certain that when she made known these visions, the Blessed Virgin had not learned the fulness of the mystery of her Son. He was to her wonderful, but He was not God. Even though He should be called "Son of God," this could be interpreted otherwise than it was afterwards by the writers of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Johannine Gospel,—for is there not a sense in which we are all sons of God? There is nothing in these visions to indicate incarnation. The Virgin-birth itself was inexplicable ; and yet it is possible that she failed to apprehend the difficulties which we have discovered. Her faith was simple. She remembered these things, without grasping their explanation, and she made known the three annunciations simply as they happened, perhaps using well nigh the words in which the Evangelist has preserved the tradition.

For His purposes, God uses means without regard to our judgement of their value.

And yet, if our hypothesis may be allowed, they who despised these shepherds, and doubted their vision, certainly made a mistake. In all ages, classes which regard themselves as superior are apt to think slightingly of classes which they esteem inferior. Perhaps it is to be expected that they who take it for granted that they know, should refuse to listen to those who they

are satisfied do not know. But in spiritual matters it is never safe to ascribe knowledge or ignorance to any one. Oftentimes it happens that God hides His mysteries from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes. These shepherds, notwithstanding their menial calling, were types of men and women who in all ages and in all classes have had ideals, aspirations, visions,—as though to them, while others were dull in sleep, the heavens were opened, and they had heard songs of hope such as earth never sings; and forthwith they would search for Him who alone can be the realization of that of which they dream, and who alone can satisfy their heart's desire. It is significant that the first proclamation of the new Gospel should have been made to these lowly and humble men, and that the revelation came as they were occupied in their ordinary avocation. Not only was it true of the Blessed Virgin, but also of the shepherds, as it should be of others in the generations to come: the folk of low degree should be exalted, and the hungry should be filled with good things.

God's revelations are not always to be measured.

It had been a wonderful night, the most wonderful, as Christendom came to learn, the world had ever known; and in great joy the shepherds went back to their flocks, perhaps as the dawn broke over the hills of Moab and on the wilds of Judæa, not knowing much, and certainly not foreseeing that this Child, the Word of Him who made the sun and the mountains, should give everlasting life to multitudes as yet unborn, and for ever beyond numbering.

X.
THE CIRCUMCISION:
Luke ii. 21.

And when eight days were fulfilled for circumcising him, his name was called JESUS, which was so called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Of the obedience of Christ to the law.

It does not follow because no mention is made of a feast such as was given in the case of John the Baptist, that no feast was held; nevertheless, under the circumstances, it seems most likely that such was the fact. This may have been one of those constantly recurring instances where the usual festivities were necessarily omitted. The significant fact is, however, that our Lord was so made like unto His brethren in all things, especially in respect to bodily infirmities, that it behoved Him to submit to the laws which had been enacted in reference to those infirmities. He was indeed without sin, and therefore circumcision could have had for Him no saving grace; but He could not set Himself beside those who had need of such without expressing His faith in the remedy for that need. The necessity of circumcision for Himself was not in question. But the law was imperative, and the time had not come for the abrogation of that law; nor could He who came to fulfil all law begin by breaking the law. His submission to this law is the more to be observed, because, while the law had been made of solemn obligation to Israel, so that they who had not been brought into obedience to it were cut off from their people, yet it was not one of those essential and unchanging principles, such

as a precept of morality, which can never be dispensed with. Though of long continuance, after all it was temporary and could be abolished. It was no more than a sign, taken from a custom which had been devised originally for sanitary purposes, just as the rainbow, selected from among natural phenomena, had been a sign between God and His chosen people. It was not of the essence of the covenant: as St. Paul maintains, in the Epistle to the Romans (iv. 10, 11). Our Lord's obedience to it, therefore, indicated His recognition of the duty of honouring every law laid by society upon the individual, even though the law should be on the verge of losing its significance and of passing into desuetude. They who regard the Messiah as a revolutionary, defying and setting aside at His own will national or ecclesiastical principles, should remember not only His own declaration that He came to fulfil the law and not to destroy the law, but also that He Himself was subject willingly to the same rites which had been ordained for all His countrymen. Moreover, by His submission to this rite, recognition is given to the duty and the responsibility of the parent in deciding the religious character of the child. No one supposed that an infant had a choice in the matter of being marked as God's servant, any more than he had in being born into the world. An obligation rested upon him whether he willed it or not. It was no more left for him to say whether he would be circumcised and thereby be added to Israel, than, had

it been possible, it would have been left for him to decide if he chose to be born an Israelite or an Egyptian, or, for that matter, if he cared to be born at all. Our Lord's circumcision testified to His acquiescence in those duties which come to us not of our own volition, but of the will of others and of necessity.

Of the Feast of the Circumcision.

The day for the commemoration of this event in the life of our Lord, the octave of Christmas, was not definitely observed till long after the feast of the Nativity had been instituted. This may have been for the reason that a heathen festival held on this day was marked by an extraordinary amount of riot and licentiousness, and to guard the unwary the Church enjoined a solemn fast. As paganism died, between the seventh and tenth centuries, the fast gradually changed into a feast. Both Milton, in his ode on the Circumcision, and Keble, in his verses for the feast, in common with many other writers, regard the ceremony in this instance to have been symbolical of the sacrifice at Calvary; and the *Legenda Aurea* reminds us that this was the first shedding of the blood of Him who came to shed His blood for man.

The whole chapter in the *Legenda* on the Circumcision is worth reading.

The Giving of the Name.

Of the Name that was given Him nothing need be added to what has been said already concerning it. Only, perhaps, this, that names are not commonly settled upon before the possibility of their application is realized. Nor was this name the choice of Mary or Joseph: it was given by the angel. This is the Name which is above every name. This is the Name, says St.

Bernard, of our Saviour, our brother, hid from the beginning of the world, but in the end thereof revealed and made known.

XI. THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, AND THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD: Luke ii. 22–24.

And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought him up to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord), and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.

Two ceremonies were here united in the one observance: the purification of the mother, and redemption of the firstborn.

Of the period of the Purification.

In the story little stress is laid on the former of these rites, though the custom was ancient, the duty indispensable, and the ceremonies elaborate. While the weight of evidence is in favour of the reading, "*their* purification," some manuscripts have "*his* purification," which can scarcely be a correction, and the text used in A.V. has "*her* purification," which manifestly is a correction, and is almost without authority. The plural involves both mother and child in the necessity of purification, which is not expressly done in the law on the subject: Leviticus xii. Irenæus, in quoting the text, omits the pronoun, and says, "When the days of purification were accomplished"; but Hippolytus, in the early part of the third century, commenting on this verse, declares that the

Adv. Hær., III. x. 4.

gifts of purification according to the law were offered for Christ, in that He was made under the law. He was purified, adds this writer, after the manner of the firstborn, not because He needed the ceremonial, but because He would redeem those who were under the curse. This would imply some confusion in the thought of purification and of redemption ; and we may reasonably conclude that properly the one belonged to the mother, and the other to the child. At all events, the Levitical law considered the mother only ; and the law was based upon physical necessities rather than upon moral conditions, though in the Mosaic legislation the physical and the moral are regarded practically as one. After the birth of a male child, the mother was unclean for seven days, and continued separate for thirty-three days more ; after a female child, both periods were doubled,—the reason thereof is open to conjecture. In these days of separation, among other injunctions, the woman was not permitted to come into the sanctuary, or to touch any hallowed thing. The sanitary reasons are evident ; and the violation of the injunctions, thereby endangering health and possibly life, was regarded as sin, moral as well as physical. The protection of the woman lay behind these provisions.

Of the Offerings at the time of the Purification.

At the end of the days of separation, the woman, presumably accompanied by her husband and some of her friends, came and brought her offering, in early days, to the door

of the tabernacle of the congregation, or, as in later times, to the appointed court in the temple. Two oblations were made: one a sin-offering, and the other a burnt-offering. For the former, invariably a turtle dove or a young pigeon was presented; for the latter, the more wealthy brought a lamb, and they who were not able to give a lamb, did the same as they had done for the sin-offering,—making the whole, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. The alternative seems to have been intended to meet the possibility that tame or domestic pigeons could not be obtained: in such case, doves from the forest would answer the purpose. Provision, however, was still further made, that in case neither doves nor pigeons could be had, a sin-offering might consist of the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour. Perhaps the reason that St. Luke quoted the law as referring only to the offering of the doves or pigeons, may have been that he thought principally of the sin-offering,—Christ had been brought under sin, though He did no sin, that He might save those who were under sin. The burnt-offering may not have been so prominent a factor; but had it been it is not to be implied, because the Blessed Virgin gave a dove or pigeon, that she was too poor to give a lamb. The pair of doves or pigeons, Edersheim states, would ordinarily cost about eightpence, and a lamb about three shillings, between four and five times as much; and yet reasons other than poverty may have led to the cheaper offering. It is not so much as hinted

Lev. v. 11.

Jesus the Messiah, i. 196; Edersheim gives a full account of the ceremonies of purification.

in the sacred narrative that Mary did not offer all that was expected. On the contrary, the narrative may be taken to imply that, notwithstanding earlier provisions, the gift of doves or pigeons had come to be the common rule. Perhaps some reader might be inclined to observe that the historian does not actually state of what her offering consisted. She made one, according to the law which spoke of doves and pigeons; but which she made, no one knows. Her offering, however, no matter what it was, the priest presented to the Lord; an atonement was effected for her: in other words, her disabilities were removed from her, and the priest pronounced her clean. The only analogy between this service and modern offices, such as the "Churching of Women," according to Edersheim, is in language used concerning the burnt-offering: "That she might be stirred up to give thanks to Almighty God, who has delivered her from the pains and perils of childbirth, which is matter of miracle."

The Law of the Firstborn: Ex. xiii. 2, 12, 13; xxii. 29.

Another law declared that the male firstborn of either man or beast was sanctified unto Jahveh; and redemption was required. In time the tribe of Levi was substituted for the firstborn son: that tribe should be wholly given up to do the service of the sanctuary,—each man for the twenty-five years immediately preceding his fiftieth year. After this substitution the eldest born son could be redeemed of the priest at the price of five shekels of the sanctuary,—about ten or twelve shillings. The son must be the

Num. iii. 12, 45; viii. 16–25.

Num. xviii. 16; Edersheim, i. 194.

firstborn of his mother, but not necessarily also of his father, and neither father nor mother must be of Levitical descent. As Edersheim observes, this disposes of the idea, that the Virgin-Mother was of direct Aaronic or Levitic descent. At the appointed time, the child was presented to the Lord, not necessarily at the temple, but anywhere and by any priest,—to be received back again as a special gift from God. The child was not the father's or mother's child only, but even more so, Jahveh's child. Thus a peculiar character or privilege was bestowed on the firstborn son; an ancient observance, the benefit of which Jacob desired to secure from Esau.

The application of these rites in the life of Christ.

There is much that is significant in the fulfilment by the Blessed Virgin of these rites. For one thing our Lord thereby was brought still closer to humanity. As He was born among men, so should He live among them, passing through the customs they observed, and being subject to the laws which rested upon them. From first to last He was one of us, not only in the perfection of that nature which He shared with us, but also in the performance of those duties and obligations which fall to us. In this ceremony of presentation, He should be as were the children of all devout and godly parents. There should be no distinction in that service of thanksgiving and consecration. So that she who gave Him to God, thereby devoting Him to that mission for which the angel had told her He should be born, took Him back again, as from

the hands of His heavenly Father, a holy trust, to train for His life's work. Thus to Him was given a quality beyond that of mere childhood, and to her a responsibility beyond that of mere motherhood: even such as in obedience on the one part, and guidance on the other, should result in the development of a man able to bring glory to God and help to humanity. The same faith and humility which enabled the Blessed Virgin to accept the message of the angel, led her to take up this duty of preparing the Messiah for that Passion whereby He should redeem the Israel of God,—even though she understood little of what was required of her, foresaw none of the way which should lead to Calvary, and knew only that she was no more than an instrument or agent in the hands of Omnipotence.

XII. THE REVELATION TO SIMEON: Luke ii. 25-36.

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, that they might do concerning him after the custom of the law, then he received him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

Now lettest thou thy servant depart, O Lord,
According to thy word, in peace;
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples;
A light for revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of thy people Israel.

And his father and his mother were marvelling at the things which were spoken concerning him; and Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.

No other record of Simeon has survived, though in his day he may have been well known.

The incident of Simeon, though happening at the time of the Presentation, does not seem to have been connected therewith. It is said of Simeon, that he happened to come into the temple at that time,—the happening being not of chance, but of design, "in the Spirit." This implies that it was not duty which led him there; so that it is not to be supposed that he was the officiating priest. Indeed, he is described simply as a devout and righteous Jerusalemite, one of the many who waited for the consolation of Israel, and whose character and deportment, rather than an office, showed that the Spirit of God was with him. He had thought so much of the Messiah, and prayed so earnestly for His coming, feeling assured that the time for His manifestation was at hand, that he had become convinced he should see Him before he died. Absorbed in the vision or ideal of the Messiah, possessed by the spirit of the seer and the enthusiast, Simeon lived only for the hope which

No attempts to identify this Simeon have been successful. It is even uncertain, though some have entertained the idea, that Hillel had a son of that name, who became father of

had come to him. Not a leader like Moses, not worthy even to be named with him, yet aged and devout as he, longing no less eagerly for the welfare of his people, he drew near to that Pisgah whence he should behold the Kingdom, the lot of Israel's inheritance, of which the fathers had spoken. The King should come, and Israel should be saved.

Gamaliel and president of the Council.

We need not suppose that the knowledge which Simeon displayed of the character and future of the Child was of supernatural origin. It is probable that the company which came with the Blessed Virgin talked freely of some of the things which had been said of the Child, and more particularly of the vision of the shepherds. That particulars of rumours such as these did not survive may be due, partly, to the disturbances in Jerusalem and Judæa which followed the death of Herod, and resulted in the country being placed under the care of a procurator; and partly to the habit, not unknown in later times, of affectionate prophecy and exaggeration over a first-born son. The excitement which had been caused by the story of a woman from Galilee, and the dream of two or three shepherds would soon be forgotten. It would have been scarcely noticed had it not in some way or other struck the imagination of Simeon. Both he and Anna passed away not long after the Presentation; and in time only the Blessed Virgin herself would remember the things that were done or the words that were spoken.

The ecstasy which possessed Simeon did not impart information.

We may picture to ourselves the spacious hall

The scene in the Temple.

or court in which the offerings of purification were made. Of the several groups there for the same purpose,—for if the custom of thus going to the temple were generally observed, there must have been appointed times for women to attend,—one group is distinguished from the others as consisting of people from the country, and not of the city. Passing through the court, or perhaps watching the ceremonies, a venerable man, evidently by his garb and reverent demeanour an Israelite of Israelites, is attracted to this group. Probably the company was small, for the journey from Bethlehem though short was tiresome. The aged man enters into converse with these country folk: strangers to the temple, but anxious to observe every particular of the law. Not unlikely he makes some complimentary remark concerning the Child, and expresses some kindly thought for the mother. Then he hears of the Child's birth in the stable, and of the message of the angel to the shepherds. As he listens, astonishment seizes him. Can it be that this Child is He by whom God will bring deliverance to Israel? The more he is told, the more certain appears the possibility. He is satisfied. The hope of many years is near realization. This is the Messiah! The vision of peace, the assurance of good will, brings to his heart joy beyond that which angels know; and taking the Child in his arms, he blesses and praises God for this crowning mercy and happiest experience of life.

Something like this may have happened, justi-

fying us in considering the story as susceptible of a naturalistic interpretation. But it should be remembered that neither St. Matthew nor St. Luke sought for such in the traditions of the Nativity which they have preserved. As St. Matthew attributes the actions of Joseph and the Magi concerning the Child to influences coming through dreams, so St. Luke lays stress upon the work of the Holy Ghost. The messengers of the three Annunciations are angels, but it is the Spirit of God which effects the Incarnation, and inspires the song of Zacharias, the adoration of Elisabeth, and not only abides with the aged Simeon, but also gives him the assurance that before death he shall see the Messiah, and leads him into the temple at the opportune moment. That distinction between the world visible and the world invisible, between the things of heaven and the things of earth, in these later times assumed as of necessity, is scarcely recognized in these narratives. God is not only everywhere, but He is taking an active and a controlling part wheresoever He wills. As the chief event in the Nativity is manifestly the bringing of the supernatural into the natural, so in all the events connected therewith the supernatural is evident. It could not be that the Son of God, the Word of the Father, by whom all things were made, should lift up into Himself humanity, and come into this world to live among men, not as He had lived among angels without partaking of their nature, but as man, without affecting heaven in all its parts and

It is not wise, however, to exclude the supernatural.

to its remotest bounds. It was to have been expected that spiritual influences should cross the borderland to make ready conditions for the coming of Christ. We do not, therefore, feel assured that we are in harmony with the Evangelist when we consider the story of Simeon, or any other part of the greater story to which it belongs, as it is commonly considered in an age which is apt to judge only according to laws which it has been able to test, and to reject whatever it does not understand. But, on the other hand, it must be admitted that St. Luke came under the influence, used the terminology, and thought according to the ideas of his times. Had he lived in these days he might have expressed the truth in terms far different. Possibly he would have found that though the processes differ, the conclusion reached is the same. By which we would imply, that they who insist upon the literal reading of the narrative, and they who find more satisfaction in what we have called a naturalistic interpretation, ought not to think the two points of view destructive of each other, but as permissible, the historical fact being preserved by both.

The Vision of Light.

In his vision of the expansion of Israel, in which the Gentiles should be brought in to share the privileges of the race to whom the promises had been made and the revelations given, Simeon had come under the influence of the writer of the Isaianic prophecies. Twice in these prophecies, the Servant of Jahveh,—by which primarily may have been meant Israel per-

sonified, and later the One who should be anointed to represent or stand for Israel,—is assured that He will be given "for a light to the Gentiles,— a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." So again is it said to Him, "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Thus Simeon calls the Child "a Light to lighten the Gentiles," or "a Light to give revelation to the Gentiles": a Light in and by which the Gentiles shall be able to discover the truths which hitherto Israel had held, perhaps even to Israel largely in a strange and unknown language. It is not so much the use of the figure which indicates Simeon to be in sympathy with the prophet of old, but the evident possession of that catholic spirit which could not rest until all the nations of the earth were brought into the knowledge and happiness of the one true God. The exclusiveness of the Hebrew,— under some circumstances made necessary,— had ever and anon given way to a nobler ideal. By some of the prophets, especially by those whose writings are gathered together under the general title of the Book of Isaiah, the line of demarcation was held to be, not between Israel as a race and the other races of the world, but between Israel as believing in the one God and the peoples who upheld many and strange gods. Whosoever believed in Jahveh was one with Israel, and became differentiated, as was Israel, from those who did not so believe. Thus before the advent of Christ, there was a conception of

Isa. xlii. 6; xlix. 6.

lx. 3.

a spiritual Israel, greater and more glorious than a mere racial Israel. Simeon seems to have attained this conception,—a conception, it will be remembered, the Apostles at first failed to understand, though it had been a leading principle in the teaching of Jesus.

The help Israel has been to the world.

Israel has contributed much to the evolution and well-being of human society,—a truism that only our argument induces us to repeat. Its people have been among the most enterprising of traders, the founders of methods which have led to the development of business on a vast and an international scale, the world's greatest moneylenders and bankers, the readiest of pioneers in discovering and exploiting industries, and the originators of devices such as the Stock Exchange, the bill of exchange, bank notes, and public bonds, which have contributed to the possibility and expansion of modern commercial intercourse. The influence of the Jew has always gone to the help and never to the hindrance of society. Keenly alert to his own interests and tenacious of his privileges, though oftentimes evilly treated by the Gentile, he endeavoured to deal justly and mercifully with his neighbours, observed an abstemiousness and a simplicity of life rarely to be found outside his own class, seldom resisted oppression, and, except when driven to desperation, never violated the peace of the community. To him the world owes much ; but the most magnificent and most precious of all the benefits which the Jew has conferred upon humanity has been Christianity

itself. Hence it was that Simeon speaks of Christ not only as the Light of the Gentiles, but also as the Glory of Israel. He should be to the everlasting praise of the sons of Abraham. The Gentile should see through Him the mysteries committed to Israel, and in those mysteries should apprehend the honour that had been conferred by God upon a people which the nations had despised and persecuted, but which after all was the means of conveying to them truth and happiness. The centuries came when the Gentiles put the Jew to torture and to death, and at the same time worshipped as God Him who had been born of a Jewish mother, and after the flesh was a Jew of Jews.

Christ was the realization of the hopes of the prophets.

It was, therefore, with exceeding great joy that Simeon looked upon the Child, which he held in his arms, as the Salvation of God for both Jew and Gentile. Zacharias, too, had spoken, following the thought of Isaiah, of the people, who, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, should see the Light; and though the Magnificat was not so explicit in its hope of the Gentiles, yet among the Gentiles were many humble and meek in spirit, hungering for the things of God. Thus our Blessed Lord spoke of Himself as the Light of the world,—not of Israel only, but of all mankind: "the true light," says St. John, "which coming into the world, enlighteneth every man"; and as He Himself declared, "I have come into the world as a light, that *whosoever* believeth in me may not abide in darkness." As in the night, when the deep and

John i. 9; xii. 46.

unrelieved darkness dwells in the forest, and the wanderer seeks in vain to find his way, his salvation appears in a light borne by a friendly hand, so Christ became the world's salvation as He entered the darkness, and with His light led the wanderer through the mazes of ignorance, and the wilderness of hopeless devices, into the haven of peace and safety. Nor should it be forgotten, that the salvation He wrought was first and chief of all a salvation from sin,—not only from the consequences of sin, so far as that may be, but also from the desire or tendency to commit sin. He does indeed save from other evils, *e.g.*, from the fear of death, the peril of false principles, the failure of life, but He came into the world more decisively, as it was announced to Joseph He should so come, to "save his people from their sins." In the Benedictus, the salvation is declared to be "for the remission of their sins,"—the letting go of the debt. When the Passion had been accomplished, and its results had begun to show themselves in the experience of His disciples, St. Peter was able to proclaim,

Acts iv. 12. "Nor is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." This salvation Simeon apprehended. In this little Child lying in his arms, as the vision of Israel's glory and the ingathering of the Gentiles unfolded itself, he saw both the *way* of that salvation,—

xxxv. 8. the highway of which Isaiah spoke, by which the ransomed of the Lord should return,—and the *means* whereby that way should be prepared,

and the pilgrims therein made strong for the journey.

Such a conviction that the Child of the woman from Nazareth was the Messiah, led Simeon to bless God for the fulfilment of the promise made him, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. He had seen with his eyes, physically and literally. "Now, Lord," he exclaimed, "thou art letting thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." In the term "Lord" (Δέσποτα) he applies to God the most absolute and sovereign authority and dominion possible: the indisputable Ruler and unquestionable Owner of all things; and in the term "servant" (δοῦλόν) he declares himself to be the dependant and slave of that Master. Thus he expresses the opposite extremes of divine supremacy and of human submission. It is by the gracious act of the King that from further service in this world he is dismissed "in peace,"—a term familiar from its use as the benediction of farewell: a superior parting from an inferior in good will, with the kindliest of intentions; and also a term expressive of that tranquillity and satisfaction into which at death man desires to enter, a life free from disturbance, restful, contented, serene, henceforth to know neither agitation nor remorse. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Job. iii. 17.

Simeon's faith involved absolute submission.

The verb in the expression "thou art dismissing" (ἀπολύεις) may be used of the loosing of a ship from her moorings. The lading is

The Passing out to Sea.

finished, the sails are dropped, ready to be set to the wind, and nothing remains to be done but to cast off the cable that still holds the vessel to the shore. This done, the ship drifts down the harbour, and out to sea. So had Simeon long been ready for his voyage. His life's work had been done, perhaps years since. The only thing that kept him back was this promise; and now that he had seen the Messiah, it was as though God with His own hand was releasing him. An experience such as came to St. Paul: "the time of my departure (ἀναλύσεως) is at hand,"—the good fight was fought, the course was finished, and, the one last tie severed, the journey home began. The words of Israel to Joseph, as once more he beheld the son of his old age, Simeon made his own, looking upon the divine Child, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face."

2 Tim. iii. 7.

Gen. xlvi. 30.

The bewilderment of the parents.

According to some manuscripts it is said that "Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him"; in others, the reading is, "his father and his mother." The former reading appears in the 43rd verse of this same chapter, and by some authorities is there changed to agree with "his parents" in the 41st verse. In the 48th verse Mary expressly calls Joseph His father; and as such, though strictly speaking His foster-father, Joseph was known. Again we remember, that many years later, according to St. Luke, the people of Nazareth asked of Him at whose gracious words they wondered, "Is not this Joseph's

iv. 22.

son?" And St. John records the people of Capernaum as saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" It should, however, be observed that Simeon passes by Joseph and addresses Mary, and that it is Mary who remonstrates with her Son. In the Lukan narrative Joseph is given the second place. Probably "Joseph" was the substitution, but the diversity of readings is of little consequence,—except that if "his father" was thus corrected, it is an evidence of the early repudiation of the possibility of an earthly progenitor. vi. 42.

Hearing without understanding.

Besides Joseph and Mary, doubtless others wondered at the words of Simeon, but in the lapse of years none but the Blessed Virgin herself would be likely to remember them; and probably even she failed to realize their import till after the day when her heart had been pierced by the grief of Calvary. Only as she looked back out of the experience that Simeon had foretold should be hers, did she give his words their full worth. Then she called to mind that at the time she had marvelled at them. The perplexity of Joseph and Mary may be explained by their failure to apprehend the message of the angel. The vision was strange and bewildering; the message, even the term "Son of God," as we have seen, capable of more than one interpretation. Much they understood,—that, in bringing salvation to a people and country long afflicted, the Child to be born would do a wonderful work. He would estab-

lish again the kingdom, and Himself sit upon the throne of David, thereby fulfilling the hope of the Messiah. But they were far from grasping the whole truth. Of the Incarnation they had no idea; or they had not wondered at anything that was said.

Christianity cannot possibly be all things to all men.

No man can be great and do a great work in life without creating dissensions concerning himself, his character, and his purpose. He who never makes an enemy will scarcely be able to make a friend, since his opinions, if he has any, will be colourless, and rarely will he be able to reach a conviction. Strong, aggressive, and masterly men, by their very power of leadership, will divide society, and on the one side secure adherents, and on the other create opponents. If this Child was the Messiah, as Simeon believed Him to be, He would stand out as one whom men must either accept or reject. Neither He nor His message could be negative. The world would have to listen to Him, and come to a decision concerning Him. As Simeon said to Mary, "This child is set for the fall and the rising of many in Israel":—and for others beside Israel, for not only is it possible that the words "of many in Israel" should be omitted from the text, but the knowledge of Christ would spread far beyond the bounds of Judaism. So Isaiah declared of the Lord of hosts: "Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread: and he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the

Studia Biblia, iii. 116.

viii. 13, 14.

houses of Israel,"—a figure used by St. Paul. "They stumbled at the stumbling stone"; and he proceeds to quote Isaiah xxviii. 16, "even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; and he who believeth on him shall not be put to shame." The same figure occurs elsewhere: "We preach a crucified Christ, to Jews a stumbling-block, and to Greeks foolishness; but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Again, "We are to God a sweet savour of Christ, in those who are being saved, and in those who are perishing: to the one we are a savour from death unto death; and to the other a savour from life unto life." St. Peter gives the words of Isaiah more freely: "Behold, I lay in Sion an elect stone, a chief corner stone, precious; and he who believeth on him shall not be put to shame,"—or, as Isaiah puts it, "he that believeth shall not make haste," *i.e.* he shall feel secure, and shall not hurry or be perplexed. "To you therefore," the apostle continues, "who believe, belongs the honour," but, on the other hand,—combining Psalm cxviii. 22, quoted by our Blessed Lord, Matthew xxi. 42, and Isaiah viii. 14,—"to those who believe not, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner,' and 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.'"

Rom. ix. 33.

1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

2 Cor. ii. 16.

1 Peter ii. 6–8.

That which was prophesied of our Blessed Lord, and was realized in the experience of the early believers in Christianity, is true to-day.

Christianity is still to some a help and to others a hindrance.

Many still stumble and fall over Him, and many step up to higher planes of life by Him. The doctrines concerning Him which give life and strength to some, seem impossible and deadly to others. Believers and infidels read the same Book and hear the same Creed. To some minds, *e.g.*, the Virgin-birth is incredible and the Incarnation is absurd ; to other minds, both are simple, necessary, and acceptable. "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." And such, from this point of view, was our Lord's own conviction of His mission : "Think not that I came to bring peace to the earth ; I came to bring, not peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes will be those of his own household" ;—or, as St. Luke records it, "Think ye that I have come to give peace on earth ? I tell you, nay ; but, rather, division ; for, henceforth there will be five in one house divided ; they will be divided, three against two, and two against three." It was and still is inevitable,—that is to say, if men think earnestly and strongly upon Christ. Their study of Him can end only in their becoming either for Him or against Him ; and in both results, the more decided and pronounced the conviction, the wider the separation and the more virulent the

Heb. iv. 12.

Matt. x. 34, 35.

Luke xii. 51, 52.

opposition. And yet, notwithstanding this unavoidable division, this falling of some and rising of others, and notwithstanding the changes which have come over society these last few centuries, or rather these last few decades, Christ continues, to maintain a commanding position in the world. He cannot be ignored. He may be misunderstood and misrepresented, but He has to be reckoned with. Otherwise they who deny Him would refrain from pursuing their attacks upon the facts and doctrines associated with Him. He is still a sign spoken against; and in the light of His truth, whether accepted or rejected, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed.

The Sorrows which awaited Mary.

The part of the prophecy relating to the Blessed Virgin, inserted parenthetically, is commonly supposed to refer to the sorrow which should come to her when she saw the sufferings of Christ at Calvary. But it may betoken the conflict which would go on in her own mind as she witnessed the development of the mission of her Son: for had Simeon thought of suffering or sorrow, most likely he would have spoken of such as were prepared for the Messiah Himself. The grief of Mary was as nothing compared with the burden that rested on the Son of Man. Possibly after the Passion and Resurrection the Blessed Virgin received an increase of knowledge and appreciation, but before those events she does not seem to have understood, except possibly in a vague sense, either Him or the events connected with His birth. We have said

this before, but from our point of view reiteration seems necessary. Wonderful though she believed He would be,—perhaps she imagined He would attain to earth's high places, become a prince among the leaders of Israel, and marshal the people against the foreign domination: a warrior such as King David or Judas Maccabeus,—yet the deeds He did, the people He consorted with, and the teaching He gave, producing wide diversity of opinion and sentiment among those who came into contact with Him, may have been so different from what she expected, that at times probably she both doubted her own experience and questioned His claims. "He is beside himself," said His kinsmen, as one day they went forth to lay hold on Him; and in the same passage it is said that not only His brethren, but also His mother, stood outside the house within which many people were gathered to hear Him, and that both she and they sent to Him, calling Him. On that occasion, at least, the Blessed Virgin wavered in her faith towards Him. It is not to be wondered at. He was so different from the man she had built her hopes on. The impression given of her in the Gospels, certainly outside the chapters of the Nativity, is that of a woman of no extraordinary abilities or forcefulness of character; and this impression comes chiefly from the fact that no mention is made in the Gospels of any part she took in furthering the mission of Jesus. We admit the precariousness of the *argumentum ab silentio*, but we cannot

"For not even did his brethren believe in him."—John vii. 5; Mark iii. 21, 31. *Cf.* John vii. 20; viii. 48, 52; x. 19-21.

Cf. *ante*, pp. 159, 161, 164.

help thinking that had she been favourable to the work of Christ some allusion would have been made to her help and sympathy. The only occasion during our Lord's ministry, besides the one just referred to, in which she appears is at the marriage feast of Cana of Galilee ; and there with her untimely intrusion and assumption of influence she brings upon herself rebuke. That Jesus loved her is shown by His thought of her at Calvary ; but, unlike the sisters of Bethany and Mary of Magdala, she does not seem to have been one upon whom He could depend. The sword which pierced her soul and revealed the thoughts of her heart, left her unsettled, undecided, unsatisfied. She believed in Him, and yet He disappointed her, and doubts came. What had He to do with the weary and the heavy laden ? And why did He contradict and offend the priests, rabbis, and chief men of Israel ? Thus, like others, she stumbled and fell ; but, unlike many others, she seems to have risen again, till after His resurrection she reached the decision, from which we may assume she never again swerved.

This does not mean that the Blessed Virgin had not a pure, sweet, and winsome character ; that she was not religious and devout ; and that she was not as worthy as any woman could be of being the mother of our Lord, and becoming the personification of those ideals of chastity, loveliness, compassion, and grace, which through the ages, at the thought of her, have sprung up so abundantly, and have been so fondly

This interpretation is not designed to imply the disparagement of Mary.

cherished. She was deserving of the tributes of poets and artists,—a maiden to inspire the most gracious efforts of genius. All this she could be, her gentleness and piety true as the finest gold, and yet her judgement, firmness, insight, and breadth and depth of vision be at fault. The disciples, too, vacillated, but they had elements mental and spiritual which she lacked. The lily cannot bear the weight of the oak, or the jasper-stone serve the purpose of the magnetic needle; and it is no disparagement of the Blessed Virgin, while acknowledging her virtues and the honour given her, to include her among those to whom in some particulars and at one time Christ should be a stumbling block, and, in other particulars and at another time, a foundation stone upon which could be built up a beautiful and imperishable life.

Others beside His brethren have thought Christ mentally unsound.

It may be observed here, however, that though there were conditions which lessen the surprise one feels at the thought of His brethren and others that He was beside Himself, there seems to be no reason for taking their conclusion as fact. To suppose that the Evangelists depicted, consciously and intentionally, or even undesignedly, a man diseased in mind is to propose to the ordinary imagination a feat beyond its powers. And yet there are scholars who apparently believe such, and who proceed to describe the mental derangement which afflicted our Blessed Lord. They speak of Him as a victim of paranoia, a creature of hallucina-

See articles by Albert Schweitzer on the Sanity of the Eschatological Jesus in the *Expositor* for Oct., Nov., and Dec. 1913.

tions and megalomania. This is a development of criticism which puts patience to a severe test, and makes one question, if not the sanity, at least the common sense of men who so argue.

Simeon in the *Lalita Vistara:* Pfleiderer, *ut supra*, pp. 41–43.

The incident of Simeon has its parallel in the *Lalita Vistara:* or rather it has been therein fitted to the life of Gautama, and coloured and expanded according to late Buddhistic fashion. We quote from Professor Pfleiderer's summary of Foucaux's translation.

Compare these signs in the heavens with the star seen by the Magi.

"At that time there lived in the Himalayas a great seer, Asita, who perceived from wondrous signs in the heavens that a prince was born of exalted destiny either as a kingly ruler or as a saint and saviour. He came to Kapilavastu, he entered into the royal palace to see the new-born child, and recognized upon him the thirty-two signs of the 'Great Man' (the incarnation of the heavenly Buddha). After he had seen this, the seer Asita began to weep and sigh deeply. When the king enquired whether he foresaw some peril to the young prince Siddhartha, he replied:

Lalita Vistara, I. 91–94.

"'No; I weep not for him, but for myself, because I am old and feeble; but this young prince will be clothed with the perfect wisdom of a Buddha, and then for the salvation and joy of the world as well as of the gods will he teach the law whose beginning, middle, and end is virtue—in its fullest, clearest sense will he set it in the light. And when they have heard it from his mouth, all creatures observing the laws of their development will be completely delivered from birth and old age, from disease and care, from mourning, from pain and sufferings of all kinds;

those that are inflamed with the fire of passion will he refresh with the water of the good Law; those who are ensnared in darkness and wander in the way of evil, he will lead by the right way of salvation (*Nirvana*); those who are bound by the chains of natural corruption will he release from their fetters; in the blind, whose eye is darkened by the thick mist of ignorance, will he open the eye of wisdom; countless creatures will he deliver from the raging sea of this life, and will guide them and grant them entrance into Immortality. As for us, we shall not live to know this deliverer most precious! For this I weep and sigh, because I have no hope of attaining to the deliverance from disease and passion.'"

In these words Asita sets forth, unwittingly of course, at greater length than Simeon, and not without a suggestion of the Benedictus, the mission of Jesus Christ.

XIII. ANNA, THE PROPHETESS: Luke ii. 36–39.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher (she was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, and she had been a widow even for fourscore and four years), which departed not from the temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications night and day.

And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks unto God, and spake of him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The family and character of Anna.

Great respect evidently was given to the utterances of this woman, who though known to us only in this brief narrative must have been a

familiar figure in the temple. A Galilean, being of the tribe of Asher, she belonged to a family which had returned from the exile to Palestine, and was of sufficient distinction to have preserved its genealogy. Her father or ancestor, Phanuel = Penuel, bore the name of one of the four angels of the presence who stand on the four sides of the Lord of Spirits, the one who is set over the repentance unto hope of those who inherit eternal life. If she were married at fifteen, and after seven years had been a widow for eighty-four years, at this time she had attained to one hundred and six years. Her age, devotion, and the retention of her faculties gave to her words a significance which made those who heard them think of her as a prophetess,—not necessarily as one who made predictions, but rather as one who to others explained and interpreted mysteries of God. Such was her piety that, not merely at the ordinary hours of prayer, nine in the forenoon and three in the afternoon, and the ordinary fasts of Monday and Thursday, but at other times, night and day, she frequented the temple. Perhaps night is mentioned first because of the greater solemnity of religious exercises at night, and the increased inconvenience of attending them. She avoided none, and departed from none, of the stated times of prayer. The narrative does not mean that she actually lived or resided in the temple, for that would have been out of the question, most of all for a woman. Only the high priest seems to have had a sleeping chamber in the sacred pre-

Book of Enoch, xl. 9. (Charles's ed. Apocrypha, ii. 534.)

cincts, which, however, was rarely used. But Anna was at the temple so much of her time, as the priests were ordered to remain in the tabernacle, that she might be said to have belonged there. Her asceticism,—"fastings and prayers,"—was extraordinary.

Lev. x. 7; xxi. 12.

A woman the first evangelist of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so it happened, that she came into the court of the temple, perhaps at the time when Simeon was speaking of the Child to the Blessed Virgin, and hearing his words the conviction came to her as it had to him that the Hope of Israel had appeared. She took up the hymn of praise, and she spoke, not then only, but also afterwards, of Him whom she had seen, and of whom she had heard Simeon say wonderful things. It may be observed that Simeon looked for the *consolation* of Israel: she speaks to those who were looking for the *redemption* of Jerusalem. Some authorities read "redemption *in* Jerusalem," and others substitute "Israel" for "Jerusalem": but neither this nor the use of the article is of much moment. But "consolation" suggests comfort and strength under a continuance of the evils which afflicted Israel; "redemption" implies release and freedom from such wrongs. It would be too much to say that Anna had a greater vision than Simeon; and yet the words used denote a difference in the vision entertained of the Messiah. It is one thing to be sustained under sorrow; it is another and a happier consummation to have the sorrow itself taken away.

The traditions which St. Luke gathered ended

at this point, so far as the early days of our Lord at Bethlehem are concerned; but St. Matthew has preserved other traditions, which belong to the time before the Holy Family went down to Nazareth.

XIV. VISIT OF THE WISE MEN: Matt. ii. 1–13.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he enquired of them where the Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet,

And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah,
Art in no wise least among the princes of Judah:
For out of thee shall come forth a governor,
Which shall be shepherd of my people Israel.

Then Herod privily called the wise men, and learned of them carefully what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search out carefully concerning the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him. And they, having heard the king, went their way; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And they came into the house and saw the

young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

The sources of St. Luke's Gospel, especially his narrative of the childhood of Christ, unknown.

Had St. Luke received the tradition he has recorded directly and immediately from the Blessed Virgin, it is hard to discover why he should have passed over an incident so picturesque and significant as this Visit of the Wise Men. It disturbs St. Luke's narrative in showing that immediately after the Presentation the Holy Family did not go to Nazareth. In his researches, he would have heard of it had he ever conversed with the Blessed Virgin,—which doubt is further strengthened by the probability that before St. Luke's time she had passed away. If the date of St. Luke's Gospel is set at about A.D. 80, it is not likely that he began collecting his material many years earlier, probably not till after the destruction of Jerusalem. This event happened seventy-eight years after the birth of Christ, and at the time of the birth the Blessed Virgin may be assumed to have been not far from eighteen years old. Had she survived, at the time St. Luke was writing his Gospel, she would have been over ninety years of age,—not, of course, an impossible age; and again one feels that had he met so important a witness as she, he would have strengthened his narrative by asserting that fact. We suppose, therefore, that

he obtained his information at second hand, and that the set of traditions he secured had failed to incorporate or preserve this one.

Not shepherds only, but princes also become interested in Jesus Christ. From the second century three has been taken as the number of the Magi.

Of all the traditions of the Nativity, this tradition is nearly the most interesting, and nearly the most difficult. Its colouring is oriental in a sense that cannot be applied to any other incident given in the Gospels. Its picturesque form and romantic spirit suggest Susa or Bagdad rather than Jerusalem; and it brings forward characters far removed from the shepherds at Bethlehem and the frequenters of the temple. Passing by such folk, we are brought into the presence of Herod the Great, one of the most influential of the tributary princes of the empire, once an intimate of Cleopatra and for long a friend of Antony and Augustus, a splendid and vigorous ruler, a king not only of great wealth but also of great artistic tastes, as was shown by his restoration of the temple and the erection of other noble buildings in Jerusalem, and a potentate able to give full vent to his jealous temper and ungovernable passions. "A man he was," says Josephus, "of great barbarity towards all men equally, and a slave to his passion; but above the consideration of what was right: yet was he favoured by fortune as much as any man ever was, for from a private man he became a king; and though he were encompassed with ten thousand dangers, he got clear of them all, and continued his life till a very old age." He was not loved by his subjects, but they feared him and kept the peace.

Antiq., XVII. viii. 1.

At this time he was so secure on his throne that one wonders either that he should have been disturbed at a birth so obscure and insignificant that well nigh two years had gone by, and neither he nor his courtiers, or even the learned rabbis he consulted, had heard of it; or that, knowing his envious and irritable nature, strangers should have come to Jerusalem desiring to find the newly-born King of the Jews, and freely declaring their intention to give him homage. So urgent and loud were these men in their enquiries, that the king heard of them; nor were they afraid to tell him of their purpose.

By this visit of the Wise Men an influence on Christianity from the East has been supposed.

The ancient and popular conjecture, which supposes these men to have come from the distant east, say, from Persia, and which thereby has associated them with the astrologers and magicians of that country, has led to the conclusion that there came thence an influence which affected the development of Christianity. The presence of these Magi in Jerusalem does not seem to have surprised either the king or the people. Their purpose did indeed trouble both Herod and all Jerusalem, but travellers from strange and far-away lands were frequent in Jerusalem. Many races and tribes met there: some to trade, some to visit the temple, and some it may be to attend the schools of the famous rabbis. The city had been celebrated for centuries, perhaps, however, never more so than in the reign of Herod. Even on Judaism these foreign merchants and scholars may have made some impression; and no one need ques-

tion that a religion so ready as Christianity to adopt truth no matter whence or what its origin, and to assimilate to its original deposit of truth any pure and helpful thought or figure, would take much, if opportunity offered, from cults and philosophies as exalted as Zoroastrianism. Christianity was a world-religion, and not the religion of a race. It was fed, enlarged, and strengthened by rivulets and rivers of truth flowing from many sources. The Jew endeavoured to avoid any addition from without to his ancient faith. For him the revelation was definite and ended. What had not been given to the fathers was not worth having. On the other hand, the Christian Church opened wide its doors, not only to all sorts and conditions of men, but also to any thought or interpretation of God or nature that presented itself, and was capable of being woven into a religion which claimed to embody the teaching, and to maintain the worship, of the one and universal Lord and the Saviour of all men. We do not, therefore, look with disfavour upon the supposition, which indeed we admit to be fact, that Christianity received much from other religions besides that of Israel; nor do we fear that thereby the revelation which was made directly by Jesus Christ is in any particular impaired or weakened.

This is more definitely true after the first two centuries.

But there could have been no influence of this kind in the instance of these Wise Men. They could not affect Christianity before Christianity came into being; and there is not the slightest evidence that any foreign cult shaped

The visit of the Magi not a safe illustration of outside influence.

Cf. *ante*, p. 124.

the doctrine or the life of our Blessed Lord Himself. To Joseph or to Mary the Magi could have contributed neither thought nor prejudice. The strangers are represented as having been in Bethlehem but a short time, and as having gone back directly to their own country. But one leaves undiscovered their purpose in yielding homage to a prospective king of the Jews, and in bringing gifts so significant. The journey covered several hundreds of miles, and though in those days travel was fairly protected, it was expensive and slow. In mediæval legend the place whence they started, a city in India called Cassak, is fifty-three days from Bethlehem, but by a miracle they reached Bethlehem on the thirteenth day, which was the fourth day since they had seen the star. The title itself, as applied at this time to Christ, occasions surprise. Not till He is brought to trial before Pontius Pilate is the title again used of Him,—though at one time it looked as if the people would take Him and make Him a king. Pilate placed the title on the cross to denote the reason for his execution. But what had these heathen philosophers to do with a king of the Jews? Why should they have desired to make an offering to one who neither politically nor religiously could have been to them or to their people of consequence? They do not seem to have had any object except to bend the knee to Him and present to Him these gifts. The Infant before whom they knelt was unconscious of their act, and would be unable to remember it in the day when power should

John vi. 15.

be His. One can understand why many years later a company of Persian Magi made a pilgrimage to Rome to do honour to Nero, and to worship him as a god like Mithra. But even Herod had no authority in countries beyond the desert. In all history there have been few more purposeless and unselfish tributes presented to a prince than this of the Wise Men to the Child Jesus. They gave much and gained nothing,—and apparently expected nothing.

Clemen's *Primitive Christianity*, p. 299.

A close study of Hebrew literature would have made known to these Magi prophecies which had come to be interpreted of the kingship of the Messiah. The promises or assurances originally given to some of the princes and statesmen of Judah, such, for instance, as to David, Hezekiah, and Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, in later generations had been transferred bodily as it were to the Messiah. He was the king who should reign in righteousness,—the king just, lowly, and having salvation, that should come to Zion, whose dominion should be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Daniel had given some mystic figures concerning the coming of "the Messiah the Prince," and the time of His being cut off. That the Jews thought of the Messiah as a king is shown by the message of the angel: "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end,"—words which must have sorely perplexed the Blessed Virgin, when she saw Jesus ministering to people poverty-stricken and regarded as sinners. The burden of John the

The Magi may have derived their information from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Isa. xxii. 20–24.

Zech. ix. 9, 10.

Dan. ix. 25, 26.

Baptist's message betokened the near approach of the kingdom of heaven; the mother of the sons of Zebedee desired to secure seats for her sons next on either side to the throne of Christ; and after the Resurrection the disciples enquired of the Lord Jesus the time of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. The kingdom involved kingship; and for some generations the utterances of the prophets had been widely understood to mean that the people again should attain freedom and have a king of their own.

Prophecies of the Star and of the incoming of the Gentiles.

The Magi might also have heard of the association of a star with the appearance of the Messiah. At the birth of Abraham a star was said to have appeared. In an age when the people had no country to call their own, Balaam

Num. xxiv. 17.

had declared that a Star should come out of Jacob and a Sceptre should rise out of Israel; and long since this prophecy had been Messianically construed. A tradition, which has been

Clemen, *ut supra*, p. 298.

described as genuinely Iranian, is said to indicate that Zarathustra predicted the appearance of such a star; but that is doubtful. More clearly in the Jewish scriptures would the Magi have discovered predictions of the coming of the

Isa. lx. 3, 6.

Gentiles to worship the Messiah: "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. . . . They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord,"—for though it is probable that originally the reference was to Sion, and may be applicable to the Church, yet it was regarded as pertaining to Christ. This expec-

tation runs through the Isaianic prophecies, like a frequently recurring strain of music jubilant and hopeful: "I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles"; to Jerusalem shall come "the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream." So a Psalmist had said: "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him."

Isa. xlix. 22; *cf.* 7, 23. Isa. lxvi. 12.

Ps. lxxii. 10, 11.

No evidence that the Magi had such knowledge of Hebrew traditions.

But it is difficult to think of Persian or Indian philosophers as thus familiar with Jewish traditions and hopes. They may have known something of the sacred writings; and therefrom have gathered that the Jews shared in the hope common to most afflicted and subject peoples, that some day a deliverer would come, whose greatness corresponding to the greatness of the task he had to accomplish would show him to be a hero, perchance a god. At all events, he would be the servant of the god of that people, —one anointed by Deity, and not unlikely a partaker of the nature of Deity. The coming of such a leader or prince the Magi may have concluded was the hope of the Jews, whose restiveness under foreign rule, and whose determined and valiant struggles for freedom, must have been known far and wide. But the particulars of Jewish faith could scarcely have come within their view, diligent observers of the heavens though they were. Moreover it should be remembered that, notwithstanding their knowledge, they missed the real purpose of the advent

of Christ. Indeed, they do not come to see the Messiah, or to worship Him who shall save His people from their sins, but to prostrate themselves and to give gifts to One who has been born to be a King. They speak of this phase of His character only. They do not know that though a King, His kingdom should not be of this world.

The difficulties in the way of rejecting this tradition greater than those involved in its acceptance.

These difficulties have induced some scholars to deny the historical character of the narrative. Writers such as Strauss have arrayed and discussed these and other objections; and numerous and formidable is the company that has decided to set the narrative aside. The difficulties indeed are great, but all of them put together are not equal to the difficulty of supposing that the story was an invention,—begotten in the imagination of some ardent and unscrupulous relater of tales, suggested, it may be, either by some legend external to Christianity, say, in Mithraism, or by a desire to supply another proof of the fulfilment of prophecy. The difficulties themselves, which must have been apparent in the age in which the tradition came to light, seem to preclude the possibility of fiction. Had it been a device unfounded on fact, it is passing strange that the inventor should have fallen upon a phase of character which was not prominent in Christ as He was regarded in the early centuries. From the day of Pentecost, when they obtained a clearer insight into the nature of Christianity, the apostles and evangelists dwelt more upon the power of Christ to

Strauss, *Leben Jesu*, i. 222*sqq*.

save from sin, to transform life, and to deliver from the fear of death, than upon His kingly dignity. He was a king, but of a spiritual realm rather than of an earthly province. It may be questioned if Christianity ever thought of Him as the King of the Jews. The line between the new Israel after the Spirit and the old Israel after the flesh was drawn very early; and Christians did not care to speak of any peculiar or exclusive relationship between Christ and the Jews. Nor in the earliest days of Christianity did the disciples and followers of Christ look with unqualified favour upon the extension of the Church to the Gentile world. It took time for them to attain to the vision of Isaiah, or to think of Christ as a Light to lighten the Gentiles. Even though the missionary spirit, reluctantly admitted by St. Peter, but never more freely expressed than by St. Paul, had by the end of the century pervaded the entire Church, yet a degree of antagonism prevailed much later between the Hebrew and the Gentile converts to Christianity. Unless we suppose that the Gospel of St. Matthew was compiled under Gentile auspices, we cannot consider it likely that a Jewish Christian would have ventured to make pagan philosophers, or any men from the East, almost the first worshippers of Christ. And further, it would appear that had the story been an invention, the inventor would have kept closer to the terms of the prophecies. They never speak of Magi, or wise men, or astrologers, or philosophers as coming to Christ; but nearly

Cf. *Prayer before the Passion*, pp. 148 *sqq.*

John of Hildesheim (d. 1379) wrote a *Historia Trium Regum*, which was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1499. He says, "These were the firste of

myscreantes that byleved in Criste." Of these, Gaspar "was a black Ethioppe wythoute doubte."

always of kings. So evident is this, that in the development of the legends which grew up so abundantly round this tradition, instead of wise men, kings were substituted. People of later generations recalled the ancient utterances, and thus amended the narrative preserved by St. Matthew. A romance-writer would have anticipated this alteration, certainly if the prophecies gave him the hint for his story; and possibly he would have gone as far as the men of after-times went, and besides supplying more colouring, would have given the kings names, such as Melchior, Gaspar, Balthasar. Not unlikely he would have even stated the exact number of the monarchs who came, and the lands over which they ruled.

Prejudice ought not to enter into the consideration of this tradition.

We are led therefore to conclude that the tradition did not spring out of legend or fancy, but that in every sense it is historical, a record of literal physical fact. Unless the difficulties can be definitely proved insurmountable,—not, be it observed, presumptively, but conclusively and objectively, that is to say by fact and not by mere conjecture,—it ought not to be pronounced impossible. Into the consideration of either this or any other tradition, predetermined conclusions should not come. A thing is not necessarily impossible because it has been so thought; nor does reiteration prove much,—for error can be as persistent in assumption as can truth,—and they who seek for arguments only to justify their prejudice contracted beforehand are not dealing fairly with the subject. We

admit that in the instance before us is much that we should not have expected; it introduces into the cycle of traditions we are considering an incident strange in appearance, and in some particulars baffling explanation; and, probably even as in the generation in which it was made known, it appears to depart from the ideas of Christianity commonly accepted. And yet to us these objections seem to tell for rather than against its verity. Had design been there, these objections had been avoided, or at least modified. Nor is there the faintest trace of any connexion between the Christians of Galilee or Judæa, who preserved the story, and the followers of Zoroaster or the devotees of Mithra. They were simple folk, untaught in foreign cults or creeds, and had they known of myths such as those from which some have supposed the tradition came, or on which it was fabricated, they would have repudiated such with a firmness, even with a dread of contamination, not less determined than that with which their pious and patriotic fathers avoided touching the unclean things of the heathen world.

The tradition of the Star: see, *e.g.*, Hastings, iii. 205.

Of the nature of the star which the Magi had seen in their own land nothing is known, though something has been conjectured. It may have been one of those heavenly bodies which hitherto obscure, perhaps invisible, suddenly light up with a brilliancy clearer than that of the most brilliant planet, as though it were a world on fire, and then after some days, perhaps weeks, passes back again into its former darkness, and is seen no

more. Or it may have been a comet, perhaps, but not necessarily so, either tailless, or, if such were possible, with its tail hid on the other side of the nucleus. The word "star" may be used of any sidereal appearance. But whatever it may have been, evidently it had not been observed before; at least it came as a startling phenomenon, and its appearance engaged the attention of these keen searchers of the heavens. The depths of the universe, so strewn with wonders, ever and anon present surprises to the astronomer. Such phenomena occasion enquiry, but they are not in their occurrence astonishing. The astonishing feature of this instance is the association of this star with the birth of a Jewish prince. We shall not discover, however, how or why these men came to identify this appearance with Him. Nor interesting as may be the calculation of Kepler, confirmed by other astronomers since, that a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn took place in 7 B.C., and more startling as may be the conjecture that a peculiarly coloured evanescent star may have appeared between Jupiter and Saturn, such as Kepler observed at a conjunction in 1604, shall we find in them an answer to the requirements of the story. Much less will astrology help us. This system of speculation has been displaced long since from the rank of a serious science; and no one now supposes that any man, no matter how exalted his position in life, has a star, or that there is anything in common between him and the stars. Still it is curious how frequently comets, storms,

and eclipses, and possibly conjunctions of planets, have coincided with events of magnitude in the history of nations and potentates. And for centuries people of no mean intelligence looked to the stars for prognostications and guidance. So, for some reason or other, these men saw in the heavens that which they were assured indicated the birth of a king of the Jews,—that is to say, of a king of whose coming they had been expectant. Apparently the star had disappeared before the Magi started on their journey. So far it had served its purpose. Further information as to the birth of the prince could be hoped for only in Jerusalem ; and the way from the East to Jerusalem was well known. Confident as they were in their deductions, and anxious to acknowledge Him, they had nothing to do but to prepare their gifts, harness their camels or asses, and set out. The star they saw no more.

The Wise Men in Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem the Magi began their search. No one could help them. The city had not heard of the birth of any one who could be called the King of the Jews. Nevertheless they continued urgent in their enquiries ; and tidings of their presence and purpose in Jerusalem not only spread, but also soon reached the ears of Herod. To the suspicious and experienced king these men were harbingers of rebellion. Conspiracy, doubtless, stood waiting its opportunity ; and again the threatening trouble came from this expectation of a Messiah. It is probable that this hope had animated and excused

not a few uprisings. As an opportunist, who had obtained his kingdom by the skilful manipulation of chances, and who purposed holding it against all attacks, Herod could have had no sympathy with a hope which if realized would deprive him of his throne, and undo all that he had done; and most likely he had no faith whatever in a Messiah. Had he believed in such, hardened in political crime as he was, he could hardly have lifted up his hand to destroy the Anointed of Jahveh and the Saviour of Israel. And yet he knew the hold this expectation had upon the masses of his subjects. That which to him was no better than an empty dream, to them was no less than an unalterable, irresistible conviction. They and their fathers had sustained their courage through long years of affliction and distress by the assurance that some day their Deliverer would appear. Now came strangers from a far country, men of a class renowned for its knowledge of the stars, openly declaring that the King of the Jews, by whom no other than the Messiah could have been meant, had been born. He was actually in the world. They had seen His star; and had come to greet Him with gifts. Whether true or not, and beyond all question the chances were against its truth, the effect upon the people, easily excited and always ready for insurrection, would be the same. They would rally round this Child, and before many days the city and kingdom would be in rebellion, hopeless to be sure, for it would be suppressed regardless of

Herod put the question as to the place of Christ's birth in the *present* tense: thereby propounding not a *fact*, either past or future, but a *case*, a hypothetical or theological problem. He does not commit himself to any opinion on the Messiah. His enquiry was probably taken by the Jewish scholars as simply abstract and academic. They may have been surprised at his interest, but he gave them no clue to his motive. Cf. *Edersheim*, i. 205.

blood, but none the less troublesome and inconvenient. Therefore, to the king the wise policy was to deal with the peril in its beginnings. He manifested no hostility to the strangers,—to seize them would not have affected the news they promulgated; nor, as we may surmise, did he acknowledge any share in the dread felt by many in Jerusalem at the prospect of another outbreak. His inward fear was expressed chiefly among those whose interests were concerned in the maintenance of his authority. With an assumption of sympathy, he endeavoured to learn from competent authority the name of the place where it was expected the Messiah would be born. If it be thought curious that this particular should have been unknown to him, it should be remembered that generally speaking the prophecies were enigmatical and needed an interpreter, and that Herod had neither faith nor interest in questions which, if he knew of them at all, were to him as a busy and prosperous man simply scholastic and visionary.

Herod's crafty scheme to secure information of the so-called King of the Jews.

The archpriests and scribes of the people whom Herod consulted gave the prophet Micah as their authority, quoting loosely a text which in the original reads thus: "And thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Having ascertained the place, the king sent privately for the Wise Men, and doubt-

Micah v. 2. The Evangelist records the reading given by the scribes: if contradiction be suspected, see Lightfoot's *Horæ Hebrai-*

cæ (ii. 41). "These words do not at all disagree with the words of the prophet whence they are taken." Cf. *Edersheim*, i. 206.

less treating them with courtesy and consideration,—endeavouring to win their confidence, it may have been by hospitality,—he ascertained from them exactly the time the star appeared. Nearly two years had gone by since the Magi saw the star, so that He whom they would see was no more a "babe" (*βρέφος*), but a "young child" (*παιδίον*). As the journey could have been made in a much shorter period of time, this would imply that the Wise Men had spent some time in finding out the meaning of the phenomenon that had engaged their attention. Most likely the king questioned them on more particulars than the one recorded in the narrative; but that one was sufficient for this purpose. So he sent them to Bethlehem, with instructions which seem partly satirical and partly serious. Did he really suppose they would find the young Child? The *ἀκριβῶς*, diligently,—exactly, precisely, with great care,—as though he had said, "Go, friends, examine, investigate, with scrupulous anxiety,"—suggests a suspicion that he was laughing at their curiosity. "Bring me word": implying that he was possessed by the same desire, and would go and worship Him. Guileless as these men may have been, and probably they were far from such, they could not have thought for a moment that Herod the Great would bend the knee to a rival for his throne. One can fancy the king, like a Louis XI, himself smiling at the possibility.

The Wise Men depart for Bethlehem.

On their way to Bethlehem, the Magi were astonished and delighted at the reappearance of

the star which they had seen nearly two years earlier. This reappearance disposes of the theory that the luminous body they beheld was a comet, for no comet would have taken so long a time in its journey to and from the sun, and no comet sufficiently large or near to be seen by the naked eye would have returned in so short a time from its journey into the depths of the universe. The Magi, however, had no doubt that this was the same star; but, though they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, we become more bewildered than ever. The sun had gone down, otherwise they had not seen the star; and yet while a star may serve the mariner for a steering-point, it can scarcely be near enough to be of much help to the traveller across country. Perhaps the Magi did not need its guidance, for the road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem was well defined. Nor do stars move from north to south as the Magi were doing. Nevertheless the narrative states that the star went before them, until it came and stood over the place where the young Child was. It stood there, not merely stopping, but remaining there. It may not, therefore, be thought of as a body specifically known as a "star." Fulgentius ventures the opinion, that it was not fixed in the firmament, but it hung in the air nigh to the earth. But it is not easy to suppose that astrologers would take an *ignis-fatuus*, a will-o'-the-wisp, for a star, and make calculations upon it. Besides the air in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, at any season of the year, is not such as to produce

Legenda Aurea, i. 48.

phenomena of that kind. Was this luminary, then, miraculously provided for this purpose,—created and sent by God to convince these men of the birth of the Messiah, and to guide them to Him? Such appears to be the inference the tradition affords. And yet nothing, so far as we know, seems to have come of this visit of the Wise Men. Why, then, a miracle? Or, on the other hand, why not a miracle? Had they who preserved the tradition been suspicious of its strangeness, and the chances are that the strangeness was no less apparent to them than it is to us, they would have brought into the narrative some explanation that would have softened, perhaps have removed, that strangeness. Had the story been an invention, the explanation would have been there beyond a doubt. But, satisfied of the fact, they leave the difficulty,—where it remains, unsolved, and that for all time; though again we ask, Besides the Magi, could others have seen this star?

The Blessed Virgin and Child removed from the Stable into a House.

Because the earliest Armenian manuscript of the Gospel reads, "the star stood over the *cave* where the young child was," it has been assumed that this was the original reading, and that because of its resemblance to a feature in the legend of Mithras, in which the god is even born of the rock, the reading was subsequently abandoned. But, in spite of the scholarship of its advocates, this is an assumption most improbable. There is no reason for supposing that for nearly two years after the Nativity the Holy Family continued living in the stable,—which

Clemen, *ut supra*, p. 300.

we may take for granted was a cave, perhaps natural, perhaps excavated for the purpose. Poets and artists indeed have so fancied, and have represented cattle standing by when the Wise Men offered their gifts. And yet the narrative definitely states that the Wise Men came into the "house," and *την οἰκίαν* is not used to imply that the cave or stable was a dwelling-place for a mother and her child. Undoubtedly, as soon as possible, the morning after the birth of Jesus, He and the Blessed Virgin were removed to a place more suitable. Humane considerations would have demanded the change. More than such, the probability is that Joseph had the friends in Bethlehem and the means whereby to procure the necessary accommodation. It was not necessarily poverty that led to the use of the stable; and, as we have already suggested, while Joseph may have had to toil for his daily bread, he may not have been a poor man, that is to say, one nigh unto destitution, or dependent on others for sustenance. At all events, it would seem that a home had been made in Bethlehem, and for these many months had been maintained, for the shelter and comfort of Mary and Jesus. As to the theory that the original text had the word "cave," it is more likely that the Armenian translators either blundered in thinking that the visit of the Wise Men followed immediately the visit of the Shepherds, the same night in fact, or purposely intended to suggest a connexion between Christ and Mithra. To them it may

be that Mithra and his legend were not unknown, perhaps not unattractive. To Joseph and Mary, and their friends, the cult of Mithra, had they heard of it, would have been strange and repulsive.

The Adoration of the Magi.

The narrative implies that the Wise Men found the house by means of the star; but it is not certain that they went to the house the same night. It would be fair to suppose that they stayed at the khan till the next morning, and then satisfied themselves as to the place where the Holy Family lived. And again it is well to keep in mind, that far from being kings or dignitaries accompanied by retinues of attendants and servitors, these men, as became sages or philosophers, were plain, undistinguished travellers, such as could pass unobserved through the narrow thoroughfares. Their purpose was not to make a stir in the little town; and probably they entered the house where the Blessed Virgin dwelt without arousing a suspicion of their purpose. If curiosity followed them, it may have contented itself with the supposition that they were only traders seeking to dispose of their goods. Certainly no intimation is given that Bethlehem became interested in their coming, or even knew of it. Joseph is not said to have been present,—perhaps in the daytime he was engaged elsewhere in his occupation; only the Blessed Virgin and the young Child are mentioned. The gifts have been regarded as symbolical: gold, the tribute to a king; frankincense, representing the function of a priest;

The old French version of the *Flos Sanctorum*, however, reminds us that we should not be surprised that they were both princes and wise men: "Car à l'usage de ce temps-là les princes et les rois étoient très sages."

Since the fifteenth century the artists have rarely omitted him.

and myrrh, foretelling death. But it is not to be supposed that these men had any such grasp of the mission and fate of the Child they had come to honour; nor does the Evangelist appear to have thought the gifts significant, or a fulfilment of prophecy. Had he done so, after his manner, he would surely have seized upon the opportunity of pointing out the coincidence. Nor need it be imagined that necessarily the gifts were of great worth,—sufficient, as some have fancied, to pay the expenses of the sojourn in Egypt. They simply expressed the kindly feeling of the Magi, as our gifts are intended to do in similar circumstances: not to be esteemed so much for their value, as for their meaning. In this case, they were probably products of the country whence the Magi came.

The Magi return from their mission.

This done, the Wise Men set out for home. They would have belied their reputation had they not understood the purpose of Herod's desire to see them again. The tradition puts it, that they were warned of God in a dream,—an expression which would have been shaped otherwise had it been made in these days. So they went back to their own country by another way;—and for ever they pass out of sight and out of the Gospel story.

Arnobius Junior, in his notes on Ps. xlviii. 7 (written before 460), says, that when Herod found that the three kings had escaped from him "in ships of Tarsus," in his wrath he burned all the vessels in the port.

Though this tradition has no bearing on the truth of Christianity, and, indeed, might have been forgotten without endangering that truth, it has been the fruitful source of many legends and customs. Its poetical beauty is beyond question. Nor need we doubt, in spite of the

difficulties which have never been removed, that it has a historical basis. Of its customs we can only mention that of writing the names of the three kings on the walls of churches and houses, with chalk which had been first blessed in Church: as Montaigne says, "This is a day to be marked with blessed chalk."

R. L. Gales's *Studies in Arcady*, Second Series, p. 151.

XV. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT: Matt. ii. 13–16.

Now when they were departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son.

This story is not derived from heathen myths.

This tradition, like others which we have considered, has its difficulties; but we discern no convincing evidence in the supposition that, instead of being founded on fact, it was derived from the myth of the flight of the Olympian gods before Typhon. Cruel and ambitious as Herod was, he can scarcely be compared with the monster of the many heads, the fearful eyes, the terrible voices, and the breath of fire, the father of the Harpies, who would dominate both gods and men, and whose overthrow was accomplished only after a fierce struggle and by the fall of a thunderbolt. Nor could any

Christian mind have imagined Christ like unto the gods of the heathen. Neither Jew nor early Christian favoured the personification of the hurricane, or of any other force of nature, and supposed it to be other than the creation of the one true God, and the means whereby He carried out His will. In their interpretation of nature, there could be no conflict between God and the things which He had made; on the contrary, "Fire and hail, snow and vapours, wind and storm, fulfilling his word." A myth that taught otherwise would have been to them, had they heard of it, too foreign to their bent of mind, too abhorrent, to admit of absorption or imitation. However fascinating and popular may now be the habit of tracing the events recorded in the early history of Christianity to pagan myths, it should be remembered that by the men who made that history pagan myths, as far as they were known, were hated and shunned. And, this habit being extended, as in fairness it should be, one wonders how much history of any kind would be left were its alleged facts referred back to primitive conceptions and fancies. That is to say, what dependence could be set upon any record if it be assumed that the historian, instead of setting forth actual occurrences and describing characters who really lived, invented them, or at least coloured them, from some legend or myth?

Ps. cxlix. 8.

Cf. *ante*, p. 124.

Nor does it seem likely that the story was suggested by Moses' flight from Egypt into Midian, though his return depended upon a similar reason: "All the men are dead which

Coincidences do not imply inventions.

Ex. ii. 15; iv. 19.

sought thy life." Had there been a desire to make our Lord's life correspond with the life of Moses, surely this would have been an incident too insignificant for the purpose; indeed, the cause of the threat which led to the going away of Moses was not altogether to be commended. By regarding coincidences and similarities seriously, difficulties are increased and not removed. No one imagines that Mohammed's flight from Mecca was based upon the flight of Moses from Egypt. It is true, that both Moses and Sargon the Accad were put into a basket of rushes, and set in the waters of a great river; both were rescued and brought up by strangers; and both became leaders of men. But it does not follow that the Hebrew writer copied into the life of the Israelitish prophet the incidents of the Babylonian warrior. As well say there could have been no Napoleon because there had been an Alexander the Great. There is no reason whatever for concluding, because Moses sought refuge in the wilderness, that Joseph did not take the Child Jesus for safety out of the land of Judæa.

An illustration given from the Prophets.

Only on the theory that the chief purpose of the Old Testament, and especially of passages in which appear such expressions as "the Son" or "my Son," was to display the hope of the Messiah can the reference to Hosea xi. 1 be explained; and in this instance, the text speaks of a fact historical and not prophetical. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." The people are per-

sonified under the figure of a child and a son, the deliverance having been in the days before they became a nation, when by reason of their weakness and few years they needed fostering care and tender help. This manifestation of divine favour had been made the basis on which rested Israel's obligations to Jahveh. God had been wondrously provident of the people: "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love;" "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms: but they knew not that I healed them." In an important sense, the Messiah was the representative of Israel as a people, standing in their stead, and bearing in Himself their glory and their shame. He may be spoken of as having been in them a slave in the house of bondage, and in them as having been delivered by the might of Jahveh. Thus the Messiah and Israel, the former as the *genius* of the latter, may be identified and considered as one, the terms being synonyms of "the Son." Under such a figure Christ may be spoken of as having been called out of Egypt, in the salvation wrought through Moses. Thus the passage in Hosea may be made to apply to Christ. But that is no reason whatever for making a former deliverance from Egypt an earnest of a second deliverance, —unless the life of Christ was designed to be wrought on the pattern of the history of Israel. Though the language of the Evangelist is unequivocal, "that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, 'Out of Egypt I called my son,'" implying that the

event happened in order that the thing said of Israel might also be said of the Messiah, yet the facts seem to indicate a coincidence rather than the accomplishment of a prophecy. The same experience befell the Messiah as in early times had happened to Israel.

The life of Christ on earth was pre-ordained.

But for all that, no conclusive or even urgent argument can be brought against the doctrine that every event in our Lord's life was determined before He came into the world. The Incarnation certainly did not happen by chance, and the results thereof we cannot help believing were both foreseen and foreordained. We may not see how the Evangelist could find an indication of Christ's return from Egypt in the words of Micah, but that does not show that the circumstances which led to it were not under the appointment of God and made to subserve His purpose. No one can doubt this in reference, say, to the choice of Mary of Nazareth as the mother of Christ, and Bethlehem as His birthplace. Nor is it less clear in the case of the times when the Messiah came, or of the people among whom He lived, or of the racial, linguistic, social, imperial, and commercial conditions which prevailed when Christianity was first proclaimed. Our Lord Himself speaks of "his hour," suggesting that His pilgrimage through life was set and appointed, and would be consistently and unerringly accomplished. Nothing that He said or did merely so happened. The same may be predicated of all men whose determination is to do the will of God: "the steps

Cf. *Prayer before the Passion*, pp. 42 *sqq.*

of a good man are ordered by the Lord." But the truth seems to be still more evident in the life of Jesus, because so much more depended upon that life: the salvation of a world and the redemption of mankind. So we see no reason for doubting that this flight into Egypt was providential, if not prophetical, and that it came out of the plan laid down in the counsels of the Most High.

Joseph devoutly ascribes his actions to divine influence.

Perhaps the Wise Men suggested to Joseph the evident intentions of Herod towards the young Child, or he himself may have suspected the effect upon the king of rumours of the birth of a possible rival; but that did not hinder him from ascribing his thought and action to supernatural agency. As in a former instance, and as it happened again later,—the same words being used on all three occasions: "Lo, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream." The omission of the definite article does not exclude the probability that the same messenger brought the several messages: not necessarily the archangel Gabriel who made the annunciations to Zacharias and to Mary, but rather that guardian spirit which the devout Joseph, in harmony with popular belief, imagined accompanied and directed him through life. Possibly our Lord acknowledged this opinion when He spoke of the angels of little children beholding the face of His Father in heaven: and when after his deliverance from prison, which he attributed to an angel of the Lord, while Peter stood knocking at the door of Mary, the mother of John Mark,

the disciples in the house, incredulous of the maid Rhoda's announcement, declared, "It is his angel." Or, perhaps, Joseph, as he recalled the past, many years later, thought not of his own guardian-angel, but of the angel appointed to look after the young Child, an angel greater in dignity and power. In the Temptation, Satan reminded Jesus that God had given His angels charge concerning Him; and after the Temptation, angels came and ministered unto Him,—even as in Gethsemane, "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." Whatever may have been Joseph's opinion of this particular angel, it is evident that he looked upon himself as an instrument in God's hands for carrying out the divine will concerning the Child. From the first he gave himself up, as readily as did the Blessed Virgin, to an influence or power, which he could not have understood, but which, having demanded and obtained the acquiescence of his will, he knew had taken up the control of his life.

Acts xii. 15.

Luke xxii. 43.

No information given as to the route followed to Egypt.

Having become aware of the danger, Joseph lost no time in employing the only means of diverting it. The narrative tells briefly, that he arose, took the young Child and His mother by night, and withdrew into Egypt. Nothing is said as to the route taken, the manner of travelling, or the part of Egypt in which refuge was found. Many a legend has been woven out of the scanty material, some interesting and beautiful, with an approach to verisimilitude, and others contra-

dictory and impossible. Every route had its dangers: even that which lay on the lowlands between the mountains and the sea, generally taken by the caravans. Here were robbers, sometimes numerous enough and sufficiently armed to overcome the guards and get away with the booty. The best chance of reaching Egypt, however, was to join such a caravan at some one of its stopping places: as would seem to have been Hagar's intention, when she left Abraham's camp to go back to her native land. The advantages were evident: guidance and protection; also company to beguile the tediousness of the desert, and help in case of break-down or illness. But it is not likely that Joseph would venture at the outset to expose himself to the curiosity of a company of wayfarers. Fugitives no doubt did succeed in the attempt; but he had neither goods to transport nor purpose to make known. For him the better plan was to avoid the most frequented lines of travel, and seek to escape observation, perhaps among the hills which would lead him beyond Beersheba. Thence, when outside Herod's jurisdiction, he could have sought safely the company of other travellers about to cross the desert. This is at least as probable as the conjecture that he went down to Joppa, and then followed the coast-line,—in spite of the fact that tradition points out the places on the way where the Holy Family are said to have rested, and to have met with divers adventures.

Gen. xvi. 7.

Some of these legends were evidently coloured

Like clouds on mountains, legends rest and shape themselves against some background.

by passages in the Old Testament which had been taken as referring to the Messiah. Thus, when the Holy Family sought shelter in a cave, to the terror of Joseph and Mary they found it occupied by lions, dragons, and other dangerous beasts, but the Infant Christ quieted the fears of His parents, and later compelled the animals to walk peacefully beside the ass, on which the Blessed Virgin and the Child rode, and beside the ox which drew the cart containing the possessions of the little company, and thus escort them to Egypt. In this manner were fulfilled the words of Isaiah: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." Similar fulfilments of other passages were discovered,—legends which were found or adapted to fit prophecies: by which we do not wish to insinuate that they were consciously or wilfully invented. The legend is not designed to deceive, but rather to explain, illustrate, or account for some possible or expected truth. Nor does the legend attain its shape or colouring from one person, unless that person sets out to write romance or allegory, and his fictions get to be taken for facts. No doubt this frequently happened, especially in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the races which had migrated into the heart of Europe had been gathered into the Church, and began to enquire into the origins of their new faith. Like the historical novel, the apocryphal gospels,

Isa. xi. 6.

for instance, supplied a demand. They gave pictures of the early days, and particularly of the life of Christ, which appeared to those who first saw them lifelike and pleasing. The stories were not true to fact,—but they gratified the fancy,—and, even as the tales of travellers and the anecdotes of orators, may have been founded on rumours which had been handed down from remote generations. By the time, however, that such legends, no matter how conveyed, had obtained any considerable degree of recognition, it was too late to discover their beginning. No one knew aught of their origin or early development. But even then, if they were to be accepted as truth, some plausibility about them was demanded. In the instance of the subjugation of the beasts in the cave, the text from Isaiah was sufficient. None but the Child Jesus could have made those ferocious creatures mild and obedient; and under the circumstances, His control of them was to have been expected.

Legends spring up independently of prophecy.

Whatever, then, the origin of this or of any other legend, sooner or later some authority for it would be required. It is more probable, that, having the legend, proof for it should be sought in some inspired utterance, which could be construed as prophetical, than, having the prophecy, a legend should be invented to exemplify or fulfil it. If the latter had been the process, an effort would have been made to fit the legend more closely and decidedly into the words of the prophecy. In nearly every case, a strained interpretation is apparent. The supporters of the

legend have had to search diligently for a text, and then, no less earnestly, and much more ingenuously, strive to accommodate the text to the legend. Moreover, though the knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures was spread widely, even among the early barbarian converts, for whose benefit so many traditions and legends were brought out of the depths of the past, there is no reason to suppose that the most devout and diligent legend-monger ever thought of ransacking the ancient writings for prophecies which needed fulfilment. Without the legend of the wild beasts beforehand, no one would have worked it out of the words of Isaiah. And this argument would apply to the narrative of the Evangelist himself, as an answer to those who argue or suspect that he, too, invented or adopted legends to suit prophecy. On the contrary, it is far more likely that he searched for prophecy as a proof or illustration of the event he records.

The Evangelical narrative is not responsible for the legends which have been invented concerning this stay in Egypt.

Nothing is known as to the part of Egypt in which the sojourn was made. For the purposes of the narrative, the crossing of the frontier would have been sufficient; and, as Joseph desired to avoid attention, he probably chose some town or village, frequented by Jews, remote from the highways and centres of trade, and obscure enough to be overlooked should search for the Child be made. It is not probable, therefore, that he went to such places as Hermopolis, On, or Memphis, the sanctuaries of heathenism, there to confound priests and sages by miracles and conversions so numerous and

so wonderful that Egypt turned to Christianity before Christianity came into being. An Isaianic prophecy indeed said that "the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence," but its fulfilment is not established by the legend, that at Sotinen, on the borders of Hermopolis, when the Blessed Virgin and Child set foot in the temple, the three hundred and fifty-five images of the gods therein fell with terrific crash, and were shattered to pieces. Dagon may have fallen before the ark of God at Ashdod, but it is not so certain that at On, in an earthquake, the ancient and mighty Ra fell prostrate before the Child of Bethlehem. These conceits are as pleasing and as foundationless as those of later date which represent the Blessed Virgin and Child as sleeping between the paws of the Sphinx, and on another occasion beneath the image of Isis and her son Horus. Nor is it to be supposed that these fugitives from Judæa spent their time in seeing the wonders of Egypt, or in studying the lore and religion of its people. They did not store up information to impart later on to the Child Jesus. Had the opportunity been afforded them, they would have had no dealings with theories to them false and things to them unclean. There is no trace of Egyptian thought in the life and teaching of Jesus: no allusion by Him to a religion which had in it so much that was both beautiful and true, and which centuries earlier had influenced Judaism. We may be sure that the Blessed Virgin never thought of herself as Isis, or her Child as Horus;

Isa. xix. 1.

1 Sam. v. 3, 4.

and, except as a land to hide in, Egypt for her had neither charm nor lesson.

The question of resources for the stay in Egypt.

Our Lord was nearly two years old at the time of the flight, and as He did not return till after the death of Herod, in 4 B.C., the length of the sojourn in Egypt must have been between two and three years, perhaps a year or two longer. The question of subsistence there, and also on the long journeys hither and thither, bears upon the financial ability of Joseph. Food for man and provender for beast, to say nothing of clothing and lodging, and the cost of travelling with a caravan, could no more be had in those days than in these without either money or goods to barter. We may dismiss as idle tales the legends of miracles wrought to supply the means; as also the fancy that the Wise Men gave gold enough for the purpose. The more reasonable supposition is, as we have contended before, that Joseph and Mary were not as poor as is commonly imagined. They need not have been rich; but they must have had either wealthy friends or money of their own, to enable them to carry out their plans.

The tradition of Jesus in Egypt contained in the Talmud.

It is somewhat remarkable that of the many incidents in our Lord's life which could scarcely have escaped the attention of the Jewish rabbis, this flight into Egypt to avoid the anger of Herod is among the most prominent. The tradition gave rise to a singular confusion as to the date when Jesus lived. About the year 85 B.C., from the massacre of the Pharisees, insti-

See Herford's *Christianity in Talmud*, p. 52.

gated by Alexander Jannæus, "Jannai the king," as he is called in the Talmud, and who reigned in Jerusalem from 106 to 79 B.C., there escaped to Alexandria one of the rabbis, Jehoshua ben Perahjah. The coincidence in his flight into Egypt from the wrath of the king, partly accounts for the association of Jesus with him. He is said to have been accompanied by one Jeshu; and on their return to Palestine, this Jeshu is recorded as having so irritated the Rabbi with his questionable remarks, that the Rabbi repulsed him with both hands, and excommunicated him. Nor would the Rabbi restore him, even though many times he pleaded, "Receive me." Among other provocations, he hung up a tile, a burnt brick, perhaps inscribed with hieroglyphs, and worshipped it, thereby committing idolatry. Then this Jeshu began to practise magic, and led astray and deceived Israel. In an earlier record the name of this disciple who wandered from the teaching of his master is not given; and it would seem that the name was supplied long after the event spoken of happened, and later than the time when the tradition of the flight of Christ into Egypt became known. The assumption that Jeshu was the erring disciple, led the writers of the Talmud to antedate the birth of Christ by nearly a hundred years. In other Talmudic writings, however, it is stated that Jeshu was put to death by Pinhas the Robber, *i.e.*, by Pontius Pilate. The rabbis had extremely vague ideas of the chronology of the past.

The Talmud ascribed Christ's success to His magical powers.

Herford, *ut supra*, pp. 36, 55, 56, 112.

But the oldest tradition referring to Jesus recorded in the Talmud tells of His having brought "spells from Egypt in a cut which was upon His flesh"; that is to say, according to a later authority, the Egyptians not allowing any one to carry away magical charms from their country, since Jeshu could not take them away in writing, he concealed them in the manner described, or perhaps tattooed magical signs on his flesh. Thus the Jews accounted for the miracles which Christ wrought; indeed, they attributed the miracles said to have been performed by some of the rabbis to a like knowledge of magic. Nor did they despise them on that ground; or question the reality of the wonder done. Moreover they admitted that Jesus had many followers, fascinated and led astray, of course, by His sorcery. To say that Jesus learned magic in Egypt is to say that He was a great magician, more powerful than others: as said the Talmud, "Ten measures of sorcery descended into the world, Egypt received nine, the rest of the world one."

The Egyptian Rebel described by Josephus: "He was a cheat, and pretended to be a prophet also."

Antiq., XX. viii. 6; *Wars*, II. xiii. 5.

There is a possibility that the rabbis confused Jesus with "that Egyptian" mentioned in Acts xxi. 38, who is said to have made an uproar, and led into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers. Josephus, writing of the times when Felix and Festus were procurators of Judæa, says: "There came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem, one that said he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with

him to the Mount of Olives, as it was called, which lay over against the city, and at the distance of five furlongs. He said farther, that he would show them from hence, how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down; and he promised them, that he would procure them an entrance into the city through those walls, when they were fallen down. Now, when Felix was informed of these things, he ordered his soldiers to take their weapons, and came against them with a great number of horsemen and footmen, from Jerusalem, and attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him. He also slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive. But the Egyptian himself escaped out of the fight, but did not appear any more." As the traditions referring to Jeshu in Egypt were not written for at least two or three hundred years after Christ's time, and as the rabbis were not only careless of chronology, but also contemptuous of the Nazarene, believing him to have been a sorcerer and a divider in Israel, the possibility of confusion is evident. The learned author of *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* indeed points out that two persons seem to be indicated by the Talmudic terms "ben Pandira" and "ben Stada," and that the name Jeshu is attached only to the former term and never to the latter, though later "ben Stada" is clearly identified with "Jeshu ha-Notzri." He thinks that originally "ben Stada" referred to another person altogether, probably to "this Egyptian." Cer-

p. 345.

tainly "ben Stada" is described as having brought magical spells from Egypt, and is called by the rabbis a fool for his pains, and this Egyptian promised to cause the walls of Jerusalem to fall down, undoubtedly by means of sorcery.

A further digression on magic and sorcery: with reference to Simon Magus.

The contempt which the Jews had for Egyptian sorcery and witchcraft is well known; and one of the most damaging charges against Christ was this of His having gone down into Egypt and bringing back these secrets of power. Nowhere is the Jewish feeling more vividly expressed than in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, compiled at various times between 50 B.C. and A.D. 10. In the chapter on the Plague of Darkness, it is said: "And the mockeries of magic art lay low, and shameful was the rebuke of their boasted knowledge: for they that promised to drive away terrors and troubles from sick souls, were sick themselves with fear worthy of laughter." It will be remembered, however, not only that the magicians of Egypt did with their enchantments the same wonders that Moses performed in the earlier of the plagues which forced Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, but also that the writer of the Acts of the Apostles admitted the power of Simon Magus, who by sorcery had bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one. There was no question that mysterious faculties were exercised by men under the influence of evil spirits, as well as by men under the direction of God. The test of truth lay in the superiority of

xvii. 7, 8. (Charles's *Apocrypha*, i. 521, 563.)

Acts viii. 9.

the one over the other. Thus St. Paul was able to thwart the malignancy of Elymas the sorcerer by smiting him with blindness; and Simon Magus himself came under the spell, first of Philip the deacon, and afterwards of St. Peter and St. John, when he beheld the miracles and signs which were done. So convinced was Simon that the Apostles possessed secrets greater than his, that he offered to buy their power. The results they produced were more wonderful than anything that he could bring about; but, if tradition may be trusted, notwithstanding his having received the laying on of hands, and afterwards of having been warned by St. Peter that he was still plunged in malice bitter as gall, he clung to his old practices, and stood out as an opponent of Christianity. According to Justin Martyr, in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, he left his native village near Samaria and went to Rome, where he did mighty acts of magic; and Eusebius and St. Jerome tell us that to confound him [about A.D. 42], St. Peter made his first visit to the imperial city. In thinking of wonders brought about by magicians such as Simon, one questions if they rest on evidence or on tradition. That is to say, were they reported on hearsay or on personal experience? Even if the latter, a Talmudic story is not without application. Rabbi Ḥanina ben Rabbi Ḥananiah said: "I was going along a certain place near the gate of Sepphoris, and I saw a Min take a skull and cast it up, and it came down, and was made into a calf. And I went and told my father."

Acts xiii. 11.

Apol., i. 26; Iren., *Con. Hær.*, I. xxiii.; Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, ii. 14. See *Bampton Lectures*, 1913, pp. 50, 60, &c.

Herford, p. 115.

His father's reply was significant: "If thou hast eaten of it, it is a real one; if not, it is an illusion."

Christ's miracles not to be compared with the inane and frivolous performances of magicians.

No one, however, can suppose that during the two or three years of His childhood when Jesus was in Egypt, that He learned, or under any circumstances would desire to learn, any of the tricks of magicians; nor, indeed, is there to be found in the Gospels any suggestion that either Christ or any one else performed miracles other than by "the finger of God." Even they who charged Him with casting out demons by the power of the chief of demons, could not answer the challenge He returned. That the people were not unaccustomed to wonders that ran contrary to ordinary experience, is shown by the question, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"

John vii. 31.

XVI. THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS: Matt. ii. 16–19.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had carefully learned of the wise men.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,

A voice was heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children;
And she would not be comforted, because they are not.

Had Herod put much faith in the story of the Wise Men, or in the oracle produced by the learned masters of the temple, he would have had the strangers watched. He may have intended doing so, for they went to Bethlehem in the night, perhaps to evade his spies; but the probability is that he had dismissed their purpose as visionary, and had more confidence in them than they had in him. He expected them to report a fruitless search. But time went by, several days perhaps, and they came not again; and then he heard that they had gone back to their own country without returning to Jerusalem, thus defying him. Evidently they had a reason for not seeing him again. He concluded that there was more in their mission than he had suspected. Conspiracy might gather round this Child, and in His name the banner of rebellion be raised. Jealousy and fear fomented his irritation. The Magi had mistrusted and insulted him. They were beyond his reach, but he could vent his anger on the Child, and by killing Him stifle any possible revolt at the outset.

Herod determines upon the death of the Child.

Among the objections made to this tradition, it may be said that Herod would have had no difficulty in finding the house where the young Child was,—though it should be remembered that the Wise Men discovered it by the help of the Star, implying that without such indication, enquiry would have been useless. It may not have been possible for Herod to identify the Child among the children of Bethlehem. He knew nothing of the birth in the stable, and the people

The tradition has been set aside by some authorities on insufficient grounds.

of Bethlehem knew nothing of the recent nativity of a king of the Jews. No one but the Wise Men seem to have thought of the Child as such. Nor does much force lie in the fact that no mention of the slaughter of the boys at Bethlehem appears outside of St. Matthew, either in Josephus or in any other historian. But Bethlehem, an insignificant village, in those days practically unknown, could have had but a small number of male children under two years of age. They could be done away with, and the world be none the wiser; and if the world had known, no one would wonder that Herod's policy required sacrifice,—and what were the lives of a few infants? Indeed, the event would not have passed into Christian tradition had it not been for its association with the Messiah; and, on the other hand, its bearing on Christianity is so slight, that had it not happened, it would scarcely have occurred to any one to invent it, or, having invented it, to make so little of it. Whether Herod discovered that the Child whose life he sought was not among the dead, we do not know. We may be sure that he did not care for the grief-stricken mothers of Bethlehem: worse crimes than this lay against him. The Evangelist, however, always ready for parallels, saw in this event a suggestion of the sorrow which came to Israel at the carrying away of many of the people into captivity: "Thus saith the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be

Jer. xxxi. 15.

comforted for her children, because they are not."

The tradition said to be derived from myths and legends which told of the narrow escapes of heroes of antiquity in their infancy.

They who object to the other traditions recorded in the early chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, object no less positively to this tradition, though it neither touches upon things supernatural, nor contradicts the character of Herod, nor is necessarily involved in the mission of the Magi. Passing by the question of evidence,—for the reason that the Evangelist was as competent a critic of such as Josephus would have been had the event been of importance sufficient to attract his attention,—we find that the strength of the objection comes chiefly from the correspondence of the persecution with the persecutions which were said to have attended the birth of heroes such as Cyrus, Romulus, and Krishna. Of the first of these, Herodotus preserves the legend, that Astyages, king of Media, having dreamed that the son of Cambyses and his daughter Mandane would some day become master of Asia, determined to kill his grandchild as soon as he was born. The nobleman entrusted with the command, however, gave the infant to a herdsman, whose wife reared him, and in time the king's dream was fulfilled, and Asia passed into the hands of Cyrus. As every one knows, legend made the story of Romulus more remarkable. He and his twin brother, Remus, sons of Mars, and their mother, a vestal virgin, were condemned to be drowned in the Tiber. The cradle in which the babes were exposed drifted ashore, and later they were

Herod., i. 108–121.

found in a wolf's cave by the king's shepherd, who took them home, and his wife brought them up. In their early manhood one of the twins was slain, and the other founded the city of Rome. Krishna escaped from the massacre which king Kansa ordered to be made of all the children of his age in the land; but the legend comes too late, and is admitted to be due probably to Christian influence. In the case of Buddha, we are told that, when urged to slay the newly born child, king Bimbisâra refused. We have mentioned the parallelism of Moses and Sargon; and more similar incidents may be had.

Jeremias's *Old Test. in the Light of the Ancient East*, ii. 94 *sqq.*

It is not to be supposed that these legends are invariably coincidences, for some of them may have been imitations, though like conditions are apt to produce like actions and results. Without natural affection or much sense of justice, discredited by his subjects, fearful of losing a throne he had hardly gained, and more aware of his weakness than satisfied of his strength, a despot would not feel kindly towards a possible rival. No one need be surprised at the record of treachery and bloodshed; nor is this the point or purpose of the legend. The wonder is that the aspirant against whom the despot's wrath had been kindled should have escaped. Doubtless many were done away with, of whom history knows nothing; but one here and one there were saved, even as Jehoash, son of Ahaziah, was rescued from the fury of Athaliah, and rose to honour and celebrity. Then, in delight at the

Looking back, the childhood of a hero is apt to be considered wonderful.

2 Kings xi. 2.

success of such an one, legend told of the perils he had passed through. Possibly, even had he been in no danger, it seemed necessary to his fame that something should have happened so that the favour of the gods towards him should be proved. The childhood of heroes must needs be marvellous. He who has accomplished deliverance for others must himself have been delivered, for that purpose, when evil was strong against him. The Deity has always stood by his side. This has been a widespread idea ; and there is little doubt that, when necessary, invention supplied the silence of history or the failure of fact.

Analogies sought for in Nature.

That persecution which befell infants destined to become heroes, and from which they were delivered so wonderfully, has its counterpart in nature. An ancient myth reminds us that the sun himself, offspring of God, and now triumphant governor of the sky, was in the beginning threatened and grievously pursued by the powers of darkness. Cloud and storm arrayed themselves against him ; the gloom of the east followed him close ; night stood ready to envelop and hold him fast ; and soon he sank into the ocean-depths, a fugitive from the realm he had been born to rule. But nature herself, apart from his own imagination, did not teach man conceptions such as these. On the contrary, man read himself into nature, and imagined nature to be such a thing as himself. He would have seen no persecution of the sun, had he not

had the tendency to persecution within himself. The whole system of mythology is of his own begetting. A being differently constituted would have had a different interpretation of the heavens, and would have transferred there another kind of gods and heroes. We cannot imagine, for instance, an angel depicting a Jupiter or an Aphrodite. Nor is the oldest myth or legend as old as humanity itself. Man was practical before he became poetical,—at least to the extent of peopling the sky with beings whose sins and virtues were to be distinguished from his own only by their magnitude; and it would be far from easy to trace even so simple a myth as that of the sun to the days before man began to subdue the earth, build habitations, and struggle for the mastery over his fellows. He did not learn to play the part of a tyrant from the clouds driving the sun from east to west. Rather, he thought of the clouds doing this, because he would have done it had a rival come up against him.

According to his fancy man creates monsters of evil.

No one supposes that when Herod determined on the massacre at Bethlehem he thought of nature-myths or of hero-legends. Most likely he had never heard of either. But, if the evidence of the Evangelist be doubted, it is not unreasonable to suspect that either the nature-myths or the hero-legends, perhaps both, had some influence in the formation of the tradition. Not simply as we have suggested them, but in more subtile and therefore in less evident guise. When the imagination had once pictured the

Cf. *ante*, pp. 121–4.

powers of darkness as persecuting the sun, and the sun as frustrating their enmity, it would not be long before the sun would be thought of as a god or a hero, and his pursuer as a fiend, a dragon, or some other hideous beast. In time this enemy would become the personification of the powers of evil, malevolent, cruel, ravenous, insatiable, crafty, and unclean. It was described as a slimy monster with capacious maw, creeping up out of the sea, lurking in swamp or cavern or other dismal retreat, ever ready to demolish or devour all that it could beguile or capture, its pestilent breath withering and blighting tree, and bird, and flower. No weapon man had made could penetrate its scaly hide. It was the foe of all that was pure and beautiful. Out of the parched crevices in the plain or valley, after the waters had passed away, its progeny crawled, demons from the underworld, and left fever, plague, and death wherever they went. In heaven the gods, and on earth men, feared and abhorred the creature so hateful in its nature, so repulsive in its purpose, so subtile in its devices. Such was the dragon, which invented by man became man's most terrible scourge.

The conception of the Dragon made Sin even more hideous and dangerous.

For though the evils which it represented, whether physical or moral, were constantly working their ravages in human society, yet the personification of those evils, the gathering of them into a creature which combined in itself the ferocity and cunning of every beast of sea and mountain, and every wickedness which could be imagined,—all the more mysterious because

never seen,—had an increased power over the mind and will of man. Sin was not an abstraction, a quality, an act, but a concrete, living, conscious being, able to devise of itself, and to carry out its own purpose. Man can easier deal, say, with fever, if the fever be thought of as an irregularity, a swerving from the normal condition of the body, than he can when he conceives it to be a demon, with personality, active and determined. Germs of disease and tendencies to wrong-doing are not so formidable as were the demon-possessions in which people formerly believed.

The Dragon was not unknown in Hebrew tradition.

Of the development of this primitive conception, especially among the peoples who lived beside the Euphrates and the Nile, little can here be said. We pass by the myths of Marduk and Tiamat, of Horus and Typhon, of Ra and Apophis; nor may we speak of later legends, which probably sprang out of these, or were variants of them, such as the Persian story of the conflict between Hibil-Zîvâ and the dragon. The Hebrews either inherited or adopted, most likely from the Babylonians or Assyrians, some phases of the dragon-myth. We note its presence in Hebrew literature. In an Isaianic utterance, the "arm of the Lord" is apostrophized, and the question asked, "Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" Another passage in the same book says: "In that day the Lord, with his sore, and great, and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing [or the swift] serpent, even

Isa. li. 9.

xxvii. 1.

leviathan that crooked serpent: and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Jeremiah represents God, in speaking of the ravages of the king of Babylon done to His people as done to Himself, as saying, "He hath swallowed me up like a dragon"; and Ezekiel was bidden to prophesy: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." The crocodile of the Nile may have afforded the prophet an idea of the form and rapacity of the dragon; if so, no one would forget that Moses had been delivered from a fate which befell other Hebrew children. A still more repulsive creature, however, was depicted freely on Assyrian monuments, some of the ancient kings being represented as doing battle with it. On the other hand, in one of the apocryphal additions to the Book of Daniel, is described the dragon which in Babylon was worshipped and fed by a large number of the inhabitants. How it was destroyed may be seen in the narrative, which dates from about 136 B.C. In some way or other, certainly by the time or soon after the return from the Captivity, the Jews were familiar with the conception of an evil beast, figure of some fierce human or diabolical antagonist, waiting to confront the Messiah. He who should save Israel would need first to be saved Himself. If there was to be a Christ, there was also to be an Anti-Christ. With its clouds and storms following the sun, night was

Jer. li. 34.

Ez. xxix. 3.

Bel and the Dragon, v. 23 *sqq.*

nature's foreshadowing of the persecution which should come against the King of righteousness.

The Dragon in the Apocalypse of St. John: See, *e.g.*, Pfleiderer's *Early Christian Conception of Christ*, pp. 56–62; Clemen's *Primitive Christianity*, pp. 303–306.

These conceptions are gathered into one of the most wonderful and graphic visions in the Apocalypse: that of Chapter xii. It has been moulded into a Christian form and given a Christian application, but into it has been brought imagery which, through a Jewish channel, came down from the far-away springs of Sumerian and Accadian mythology. The woman robed in the light and glory of the sun, standing upon the moon, and crowned with the twelve stars, may have been anciently thought of as Damkina, the mother of Marduk, who is so described in Babylonian inscriptions, but in this vision and to Christian readers she stands unmistakeably for the Blessed Virgin; and so artists represent her, the moon being in crescent form, a boat, and the stars the signs of the zodiac. The time is nigh when she shall bring forth Him who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron, that is, the Messiah: the iron-rod, not necessarily in token of harshness or severity, but of endurance, firmness, strength, His kingdom being one that shall not pass away. In spite of the tradition that the birth of the Messiah was painless, the vision represents the Blessed Virgin as in anguish; her cries passing through the heavens, for her the expression of agony, but to the world the herald-call of hope, and to the powers of evil the challenge to battle. As if in answer to her cries, came the red dragon, gleaming in swathes of fire, horrible to see, with his seven diademed,

glittering heads and five horns, his rage and strength shown in the lashing of his tail, whereby a third of the stars of heaven fell to the ground. To the ancients, who had little idea of the distances of the stars, or that the stars were worlds, many of them vastly larger than the earth, neither the sun nor any other heavenly body may have seemed far away, or other than set on the same level in the hemisphere. Lights hanging in the sky,—perhaps, as the poets said, points in the bodies of heroes who had been translated thither, but to the eye only radiant balls or lamps ; and the dragon's tail swept them away,—earnest of what he would do when he encountered the object of his wrath.

The escape of the Woman, and the anger of the Dragon.

And the vile and frightful monster stood before the woman, "to devour her child as soon as she was delivered,"—watchful and hungry for his prey. But before he could gain his purpose, the Child was caught up to God and to His throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she was nourished, and where she remained 1263 days,—not quite three years and a half, about the time that the Holy Family were fugitives in Egypt. War followed in heaven itself: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon and his angels, and in the end the dragon and his angels were cast down to earth. Thwarted in his purpose and defeated in his struggle, the dragon then endeavoured to destroy the woman, by which may be depicted the persecution which came upon the Church, the spiritual handmaid of the Lord, and, failing in this design, he sought

after the remnants, the defenceless and scattered folk, near the borders as it were of the kingdom, which contains those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. But terrible as was his strength, and his fury scorching and insatiable, the dragon prevailed not; the gates of hell had no power over the King or His kingdom, nor could the foe pluck out of His hand any that were His.

The Dragon devises more evil.

Thrown out of heaven and frustrated on earth, the dragon is next represented as standing on the sand of the sea,—we may imagine, desperate in enmity, gnashing his teeth in rage, not crushed as yet, but begetting and plotting more malignant devices. Amid the gloom and desolation he stands by himself, alone, the sea and the storm-wind moaning, the heavens dark with clouds, the chill of death creeping along the shore, here and there a long-winged bird of ill omen hastening to its shelter,—a dismal scene, melancholy and foreboding, without glint of sun, or sound of joy, or whispering of hope. The monster looks upon the dark waters,—cold like the sea of death; he calls; and out of the deep crawls up a creature hideous and repulsive as himself, mighty and voracious, with horns on which were diadems, and heads on which were names of blasphemy. For our purpose, however, we leave the vision here; adding, that the fate of the dragon is told in Chapter xx.

Neither this nor any other legend of the Dragon has anything to do

Only a skilful hand could have wrought the ancient myths into a vision as elaborate and finished as this: wonderful even with the help

of the Book of Daniel, into which is absorbed freely both Hebrew and pagan material. In its imagery it depicts the struggle which from the beginning has been made by the spirits of wickedness against that which is good, and against Him that is righteous. God makes an Eden, and the serpent enters to corrupt. Christ comes to save, and again sin in its force and subtilty rises to destroy. It matters nothing whether man be in a garden or a wilderness. Nor could analogies to the dragon be avoided. There were earthly tyrants of extreme cruelty and of extraordinary destructive power. To the Jew it may have been as easy to consider Herod the Great as the dragon, as earlier it may have been to the prophets so to take the king of Egypt or the king of Assyria, or even Pompey, and as later it was to the Christian so to regard Nero or Domitian. The writer in the Apocalypse, however, declares the dragon to be that old serpent, the devil and Satan, chief of fallen angels, and leader in the rebellion against God. But interesting as the myth may be, and apt its applications, there is no likelihood whatever that he who recorded the story of the Flight into Egypt, or they who were concerned in it, had any thought of the legend, or of any of the instances in which it had appeared. It would be rash, perhaps, to say that the Evangelist had never heard of any myth of the kind, though it is next to certain that when the Gospel was written he had not seen the form in which it is presented in the Apocalypse, unless that book

with the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt.

Psalms of Solomon, ii. 29; Charles, ii. 633.

was put out much earlier than is commonly supposed. He must have known, and they who first told the story must have known, the visions in the Book of Daniel, that book being one of the most popular of the Jewish writings; but there is no suggestion that these visions had the slightest influence on his narrative. No trace in the story is to be found of mythical or apocalyptical colouring. Moreover, if every story of the kind is to be referred back to myth, that is to say, if it is to be supposed that a biographer is influenced, not by fact, but by legend, or by a feeling that his story must have in it the wonders of similar stories, faith stumbles against a dangerous obstacle. It would be unsafe, for instance, to trust the word of a parent who affirms that the life of his child has been assailed by fever, which fever may be thought of as the dragon that would destroy. Many children's lives have been so endangered, and he may have thought that his child should not be an exception to the rule. And, apart from myths and legends, children have been hated, ill treated, and dealt with deadly, by people desirous of securing for themselves rights imperilled by a newly-born babe.

The Story of the Flight is not dependent on the Legend of the Dragon.

The opposition to the story of Herod's desire to slay the Child whom the Wise Men spoke of as the King of the Jews, and of the consequent flight into the wilderness, must be desperate when it would bury the record under a mass of mythological lore. It needs no appeal to the

heavens or to ancient beliefs to account for an event as natural and as plain as anything can ever be. Herod's disposition is well known. His jealousy of a possible rival was inevitable. The Wise Men in avoiding a return to Jerusalem awakened his worst suspicions. He acted accordingly. Why think of him as the dragon of Sumerian antiquity or of Apocalyptic vision? And why suppose a writer, who tells a simple, straightforward story, perfectly natural in all its parts, to be other than honest and truthful? Certainly it ought not to be assumed, without clear and definite evidence, that he and his story are false. The probability of truth is heavily on the side of the Evangelist.

The Evangelist may be supposed to have considered carefully the evidence before him.

It will be said that the tradition was developed by several, perhaps by many, people; and that the seed or germ once sown grew up into its present form, as plants grow, the process invisible, and without blame to anyone. The seed, foreign in its origin, fell into Christian soil and sprang up. The Evangelist found the tradition, and took its accuracy for granted,—though it is possible that the Evangelist rejected many a tradition which came before him; both he and the other Evangelists, or, if the expression be preferred, the editors or compilers of the Gospels, having some ability not only to collect facts, but also to examine evidence. We have no right to assume that no critical skill was exercised in the compilation of these narratives. St. Luke positively affirms that he "accurately traced all things from the beginning," and he implies that he examined

carefully the many records which had been made already of the life of our Lord. Still, allowing that the writer of St. Matthew found the tradition, and by a mistaken judgement concluded it to be genuine, the objector should show that its seed or germ is necessarily mythical and not presumably historical. If mythical, he should account for the absence in the story of mythical colouring and tendency. A myth does not diminish in wonder and mystery with its age. As it goes on from country to country and from generation to generation, it is apt to expand in detail and to increase in symbol. There is no sign of this in the story of the Flight into Egypt. The narrative is plain, unadorned, direct. It sets forth what is manifestly intended to be a simple statement of fact. It requires no little ingenuity to make anything else of it; and though the event it describes has been questioned, yet, till of late years, no one thought of it as the outcome of a myth.

The Vision in the Apocalypse contains notable testimony to Jesus.

This does not imply, however, that the Apocalyptic vision is without reference to Christ. It is one of the most significant visions ever conceived by man; all the more striking because the growth of an interpretation of nature and a realization of human character, which may have been attained by man in ages far beyond the reach of history. The dragon may be taken as the personification of the powers of evil which were combined and arrayed against Christ from the day of His Nativity, till in the Ascension He was caught up to God and to His throne. To com-

bat these powers was part of the preparation for the Passion. Not only was He obliged to seek refuge in Egypt, but He was driven into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil; He was misunderstood, maligned, and held up to scorn and contempt; the mightiest of Jewish sects, the leaders of His people, scribes, lawyers, priests, even the High Priest, followed Him to death; the authority of the Empire was used against Him: and thus the dragon, symbolical of all the principalities and adversities, sought to destroy Him. In this sense, it may be said that the myth of the dragon had its realization. Even in the Passion, at Gethsemane, and on the Cross, Satan ceased not his attacks. So in the history of early Christianity may be found instances to which some phases of the vision may be easily applied. Every age, indeed, reads into the vision and out of the vision what appears to correspond with its conditions. The dragon and his myrmidons are made to stand for evils, possibly far from the mind of the writer, but to the reader present and living. Some have seen in the two beasts Pagan Rome and Papal Rome; others the Renaissance and Protestantism; and others again, the spirit of war and the despotism of commerce,—"no one might buy or sell, except him who has the mark —the name of the beast or the number of its name." In that the beasts are figures of tyrannies, if these are tyrannies,—and to those who think them such, they are such,—the interpretation may be justified, though it may be far

Rev. xiii. 17.

from the purpose of the vision. Whatever or whoever seeks to debase, corrupt, hurt, or destroy that which is pure and beautiful may be compared unto one or other of the creatures brought up by the dragon out of the abyss. And yet, it is possible, that the evils which the seer himself intended the beasts to represent have not so far been manifested,—that these things, which out of ignorance or bitterness some have thought evils, were things which others, with a happier and healthier judgement have realized to be productive of great good, and that the world has not known, even in its darkest days, the force and fierceness of which Satan is capable when driven, as he will be driven, like a wounded and infuriated monster, to desperation. The key of the Apocalypse has not so far been put into any man's hand. But there will come a day when the interpretation will be reached, true and final; the mystery of wickedness be made plain; and man delivered from the fear which once he read in the sky, and ever felt in his soul.

XVII. THE RETURN TO NAZARETH: Matt. ii. 19–23.

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead who sought the young child's life. And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judæa in the room of his father Herod,

he was afraid to go thither ; and being warned of God in a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth ; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene.

St. Luke having no record of the traditions concerned with the visit of the Wise Men, the massacre of the Innocents, and the Flight into Egypt, describes the return to Nazareth as happening soon after the Presentation in the temple. He contents himself therefore with a bare mention of the journey home, and a general reference to the development of the Child.

And when they had accomplished all things that were according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom : and the grace of God was upon him. Luke ii. 39, 40.

Joseph discovered that Archelaus was no better than his father.

The writer of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, being apparently unaware of the traditions belonging to Nazareth, speaks of that place as though it were scarcely known to his readers ; and implies not only that Joseph intended to make his home in Judæa, presumably in Bethlehem ; but also that till Joseph reached the borders of that province he had not known of the accession of Archelaus. Possibly, however, at the time when Joseph would enter the land some disturbance arising from the misgovernment of Archelaus had broken out, which

led Joseph to change his plan and go to Nazareth. It may not have been a suspicion of Archelaus personally, but a fear that Archelaus could not control the disorder prevailing in his jurisdiction. In this turning to Nazareth, evidently against the wishes of Joseph, the writer saw another instance of the fulfilment or illustration of prophecy.

Of the term "Nazarene."

Much dispute has arisen as to the meaning of the Evangelist's allusion. The "saying" is not to be found in any of the prophets, or in any pre-Christian writing, canonical or uncanonical; nor is there any etymological connexion between the terms "Nazarene" and "Nazarite." The latter epithet could not be applied to Jesus. He was not an ascetic, and there is no intimation that he had taken the vows or observed the customs of men who had so separated from society. But though none of the prophets spoke of Christ as a "Nazarene," they did speak of the "Branch" that should grow out of the root of Jesse,—the "Branch of the Lord" that should be beautiful and glorious, —the "Branch of righteousness" which should grow up unto David;—and of "my servant the Branch,"—"the man whose name is the Branch." These utterances were referred to Christ. He was the "Branch"; and the Hebrew word for branch or sprout may be connected with the name Nazareth. Possibly the place may have been so called from some feature of its fertility, *e.g.*, the extraordinary sprouting of shrubs or flowers. At all events, it is fair

Isa. xi. 1; iv. 2.

LXX translates ἄνθος = a blossom.

Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15.

Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12.

Heb. "Natzer," but scarcely "Tsemach."

to conjecture that Ναζωραῖος, and its parallel Ναζαρηνός, means an inhabitant of the town Nazareth, and that it was peculiarly applicable to the Messiah because He was a Branch,—the Branch or Offshoot of David. By that name He came to be known. Of Nazareth more will be said further on.

Joseph is under constraint against his will to go to Nazareth.

Joseph had good reason to avoid Judæa. He would have been remembered in Bethlehem, and though no one could have blamed him for saving the life of the Child Jesus, yet sooner or later tidings would have reached Archelaus, that the Child his father had sought to remove from possible rivalry had come back again. Even had Archelaus been indifferent to such information, life and property had been made insecure throughout the country by the disturbances occasioned by the new government, and the outbreak of social and political grievances, which under Herod the Great had been more or less suppressed and kept out of sight. At this time Judæa was by no means a land in which to find peace and a livelihood. No one now lived who sought the young Child's life; but rebellion was afoot, and violence threatened to destroy.

Archelaus justly obnoxious to the Jewish people.

Of Archelaus, a son of Herod the Great and his Samaritan wife Malthace, little need be said. He inherited his father's vices, and apparently none of his father's abilities. His habits were gross; his character unrelieved by the slightest approach to consideration for others. With ruthless cruelty he quenched a sedition which

occurred soon after the death of his father, slaughtering not less than three thousand persons within the precincts of the temple itself; and he further outraged the Jewish sense of propriety by divorcing his wife Mariamne, and marrying Glaphyra, daughter of the king of Cappadocia. She was a widow, first, of Archelaus's half brother Alexander, and, secondly, of Juba, king of Lybia. Probably her beauty was such as that of her grandmother, the wife of a general who had served under Mithridates, and whose charms attracted the notice of Pompey. This marriage gave a lasting shock to the people of Judæa. Notwithstanding their protests, however, the emperor assigned him half of the country which had been subject to his father, including Judæa, Samaria, and Idumea, but, as though doubtful of his character and qualities, the emperor gave him the title of ethnarch only, and promised him the royal dignity if he governed virtuously. His administration led to a series of disasters and revolts. "He used not the Jews only," says Josephus, "but the Samaritans also, barbarously"; and in the ninth year of his government, in 6 A.D., he was deposed by Cæsar, and banished to Vienne in Gaul,—a city later to be made famous in legend as one of the places to which the body of Pontius Pilate was taken.

Wars, II. vii. 3.

Passion of Christ, p. 136.

The Times of the Passover about A.D. 5.

Now if our Blessed Lord was born in the year 8 B.C., as the evidence, "scanty indeed," says Sir William Ramsay, "but coherent and unequi-

vocal," justifies us in supposing, it was during the reign of Archelaus that Jesus reached the age of twelve years, and went up to Jerusalem with His parents,—probably at the Passover of A.D. 5 : the year before the deposition of Archelaus. At this time one Jesus, the son of Seë, an otherwise unknown individual, but appointed by Archelaus, was high priest. No rabbi of learning and authority, such as Hillel and Shammai, a generation earlier, or Johanan ben Sakkai, a generation later, has been remembered ; but the schools at Jerusalem undoubtedly maintained their reputation, and had many strong, if not remarkable, masters. But Judæa and Jerusalem were in sorry condition. Protests against the ethnarch waxed louder than ever. His extravagance, oppression, and weakness occasioned abuses that threatened to throw society into almost hopeless ruin. The growth of a noisy and vigorous national party, determined upon ending the rule of the Herodian family, added to the confusion. That end came the following year, and Judæa passed into the hands of a Roman procurator. These troubles, however, do not seem to have hindered the pilgrimages from abroad to the festivals at Jerusalem. If the roads were less safe, the pilgrims banded together in larger numbers and armed themselves more efficiently. And that which they regarded as a duty, to the people of Jerusalem had become too remunerative to allow its discontinuance. Everything was done to encourage these ancient usages ; and even in the most lawless times the Passover

in Jerusalem lost little of its magnitude of numbers, and none of its solemnity of service.

XVIII. THE VISIT TO JERUSALEM: Luke ii. 41–52.

And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast; and when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not; but supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: and when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him.

And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions: and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him, they were astonished: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

Gk. "in the things of my father." The first recorded words of Jesus.

And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.

There is nothing so singular in this incident as to imply that the like could not have happened many times.

A similar episode is recorded of Gautama Buddha, born about 500 B.C., but the legend is as late as the early Christian centuries. When about the age of twelve years, one spring day Gautama was found with five foreign sages in

meditation under the shadow of a tree, bright with wondrous light like the moon amid the stars. The perplexity and astonishment of his father drew from him rebuke and admonition. But, so the story runs, he returned with his father to the city and dwelt there, accommodating himself to the customs of the world, yet in spirit busied with the thought of his departure to become perfect and pure existence. On another occasion, Gautama was brought into the school, when his superior knowledge of the whole sixty-four writings of Indian wisdom astonished his teachers, and put them to the blush. In another legend it is stated that when complaint was made of his deficiency in martial and athletic exercises, he accepted a day of trial, and surprised all present, without any previous practice, by his superiority in archery and in "the twelve arts." It is not necessary, however, to suppose that these Buddhist legends and the narrative of Christ among the doctors were copied, either the one from the other. If they are in any way dependent,—and the dissimilarities are quite as numerous as the resemblances,—the probability is that the Buddhist writer borrowed from the Evangelist. As we have already maintained, the Gospel is older than the *Lalita Vistara*, at least as we know it, nor is the *Lalita Vistara* the earliest collection of Buddhist legends. But, as a matter of fact and speaking generally, the Buddhist stories and the Christian story are perfectly natural, and neither tradition violates the appearance of truth. It is another instance

Lalita Vistara, quoted by Pfleiderer in *Early Christian Conceptions of Christ*, p. 43; *cf.* Clemen's *Primitive Christianity*, p. 311; and Monier-Williams's *Buddhism*, Lect. II.

where coincidences and parallels may be set aside without a second thought. As well dispute the origin of Confirmation, or the examination of a candidate who would pass to a higher grade of study. No one can question that from the beginning some ceremony or custom was observed whereby youth was recognized as having passed from childhood into manhood. Christ followed the rule and habit of His people when at the age of twelve He went up to Jerusalem with His parents, to begin that observance of the Passover which He would continue year after year for the rest of His life.

Some difficulties in the tradition.

Improbabilities in the story are alleged: *e.g.* that a lad twelve years of age should have engaged the attention of the masters of a rabbinical school,—men of rank, scholarship, and reputation, such as taught in the temple at Jerusalem. Doctors and professors are not given to such exercises. Nor is it likely, amid the confusion of a pilgrimage, that parents would go a day's journey, or even start on the journey, without ascertaining the presence of their child. Again, some critics suspect the knowledge commonly supposed to be implied in the words of Jesus to His mother: that God was His Father in a way different from that in which He was the Father of every Israelitish child, and that He would rebuke her for speaking of Joseph as His father. Perhaps the answer He made to her may not be regarded as respectful as it should have been. Such improbabilities exist. But had the story been an

Some scholars dispute the existence of a rabbinical school in the Temple; but we may assume that the Evangelist was not without authority for his statement that Jesus was found among the doctors *in the Temple*.

The article is idiomatic. Christ used it of Himself and of others: ὁ πατήρ μου = the father of me, and ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν = the father

invention, without historical foundation, they are the very improbabilities which the inventor would have avoided. Had he not been certain of his facts, exceptional though he knew them to be, he would not have ventured on statements which could have been so easily disproved. He would never, for instance, have made the mistake of attributing to the Child Jesus a knowledge of His own pre-existence and conception, which knowledge it was necessary He should not have were He to be perfect man. Possibly, however, the words of Jesus to His mother have been misinterpreted, and it may be they ought not to be taken either as reproachful, or as referring to God other than as He had been taught, in common with most children, to consider Him, the Father to whose glory this temple had been built, and to whom sacrifices and prayers were offered. It is true that Mary speaks, and not Joseph,—at least that seems to be implied; but it does not follow that the Child Jesus knew that Joseph was not His father, or either that Mary had told Him anything that would lead Him to that conclusion, or that He had divined it Himself. On the contrary, Mary definitely calls Joseph His father; and had this been a late or an invented tradition, it is certain that she would not have been represented as doing so. The writer appears unconscious of any difficulty latent in his language. He simply tells his story, without thought of improbabilities. He realizes none, because he believes his story to be true.

of you (*e.g.* Matt. v. 16, 45, 48; vi. 26). So Mary said to Him ὁ πατήρ σου = the father of thee. And it was thus used of others than God: *e.g.* Matt. iv. 21, 22; viii. 21; Luke xv. 17; John viii. 38, 39. Farrar's note is off the mark [*Cam. Com. on Luke*, p. 78]. Necessarily in John xx. 17 the article is omitted: otherwise two fathers would have been implied [see Pearson, p. 52].

The incident wholly unexpected.

It is evident that this episode had nothing whatever to do either with the Passover ceremonies, or with the making of Jesus "a son of the Commandment." If when, by virtue of his having attained the age of thirteen years, a youth assumed the observance of the ordinances of religion, there were any rite to mark such coming of age, it would have been performed at home, perhaps in the village synagogue. There was nothing of the kind to be done by strangers at Jerusalem. His coming with His parents to keep His first passover in Jerusalem, is the act by which Jesus takes upon Himself the duties of an adult Israelite. The passover could have been kept at Nazareth, but Joseph and Mary had observed the more honoured custom of keeping it at Jerusalem. Presumably they had the means wherewith to carry out this more expensive method of celebration. To Jesus, if the comparison may be allowed, the occasion was as the first Communion of a child in some distant and peculiarly sacred church, say, at Easter. Hither the parents had annually resorted: now their Child goes with them. Jesus does not go up to Jerusalem to be recognized or qualified as "a son of the law," now to keep the passover, but rather because He has reached the age and complied with the conditions, which enabled Him to do so.

The Pilgrims start for Home.

At all events, the passover was ended, and all other functions belonging thereto were done. The pilgrims assembled to set out on their

journey back to Galilee. In the bustle and tumult the Child Jesus was lost sight of: nothing more likely than that He was with other lads of the company, perhaps already in the fresh, early morning some distance ahead. They would walk much of the way, and after the manner of boys hasten to reach the first resting place. Reasonably enough, Joseph and Mary would suppose Him to be thus occupied. They had no suspicion that for the nonce He had severed Himself from parental control,—an act, however, which they who preserved the tradition did not construe as involving disobedience or wrong: another suggestion, to those who think otherwise, of the early date of the story. But when evening came on, and the preparations for the night's rest began, His parents were alarmed on discovering that the Child Jesus was not to be found, that He had not been seen all day. No one could account for His absence. We can imagine the anxiety. For the parents there was nothing to do but to retrace their steps, and on their way back to Jerusalem make search for tidings of the Child. Perhaps He had been stolen, or had fallen unnoticed by the way.

The Search in Jerusalem.

The return could scarcely have been made that night, and not till the next evening could the parents have reached Jerusalem. Their quest in the city began seriously on the morning of the third day. Where they went and what enquiries they made, we know not. He was not at the caravanserai or inn, where the pilgrims lodged, or with the friends with whom they may

have sojourned. At a time when the city was crowded with strangers, more lads than one were likely to get lost. It would seem that Joseph and Mary had exhausted every hope before they thought of the temple. Strangely enough, that was the last place which occurred to them :— strangely, because they appear to have taken no notice of the quiet, reflective, and studious qualities which tradition has led us to suppose were so conspicuous in Jesus, even as a child. There is no evidence of their having had the slightest surmise that the inclinations of the Boy would take Him to the temple. They did not understand Him. For that matter, Mary had to wait till He had passed away from earth before she could understand, and to Joseph the knowledge never came in this life. This short-sightedness should be observed, even if it cannot be explained. It goes to confirm the supposition advanced earlier in this study, that neither Joseph nor Mary had any idea of the Divine nature of the Child. They seem indeed to have lost any expectation they may have had that He was destined to take an important position in life, much less that He should be the Messiah.

The Child Jesus in the Consistory of the Rabbis.

It is not clear whether the "three days" in the 46th verse means the third day from the setting out of the caravan for home, or that three days had been taken up in the search after the return to Jerusalem. When His parents did find Him, they were amazed. In an assembly of the doctors and teachers of the law, rabbis whose person and authority all men held in

deepest awe, they saw the Child listening to instruction such as they had never heard. We can picture Him, probably sitting on the ground, the usual attitude of pupils when in class, absorbed in the words of these masters as they unfolded the meaning of the sacred writings, explained the symbolism and mysteries of the temple services, and pointed out the hope and the way of Israel's redemption. He was there as a disciple, a little scholar: not as a master, as the artists sometimes have depicted Him, correcting the interpretations of these learned and devout men; but in accordance with the rules of the assembly, reverently and earnestly asking such questions as would enable Him the better to understand the subject under discussion. In order to lead Him to the knowledge He sought for, the master giving the instruction would ask Him questions, so that He might work out and win for Himself the solution desired. His answers, His evident sincerity of heart and alertness of mind, gained the admiration and excited the astonishment of all who heard Him. Nor need we doubt that these masters in Israel learned something from the thoughtful and simple-minded Child: for some of them were as spiritual as they were scholarly, and knew well that frequently God uses little children as means of wisdom and grace. At all events, if such a scene as this happened but rarely in the school of the rabbis, on the other hand, to the Child Jesus it was an experience the like of which He had never known, perhaps not so much as hoped

for. He became absorbed in His opportunity. New realms of thought were opening wide their gates. Knowledge, that once for man had lost an Eden, was now winning back for this Child a paradise of inexhaustible joys. This was the house of God; the business of His life thus to hear of His Father.

His parents rebuke Him for the worry He had caused them.

But to Joseph and Mary, simple, untaught folk from the country, this had no meaning. There is no delight suggested in Mary's words, "Child, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" She does not rejoice at the devotion of her Son, at His anxiety to attain to the wisdom of the leaders of Israel, at the favour which He has received from these men. No sign of appreciation of the kindly things which must have been told her about Him appears. As before, she clearly does not understand Him. To her He is at this moment no more than a lad who has delayed the journey back to Galilee, and caused her and her husband much distress. But this is exactly what we should have expected. Had she thought of Him as we now think of Him, not only would she have failed in her service to Him as a mother, but He would not have been brought up and developed as He must needs have been were He to be made like unto His brethren. It was a loving and gracious Providence that did not give the Virgin-Mother to see in her Child the incarnation of God.

The Child Jesus wonders that the Parents do not understand Him.

The answer of Jesus is one of tenderness, anxiety, and wonder. He had been so engrossed in the acquisition of knowledge, so carried along

by the currents of thought created by that acquisition, that He had forgotten all else,—the journey to Nazareth, Himself, and His parents and friends,—that His mother's reproach awakened in Him surprise. Her words brought Him back again to the consciousness of the everyday life. Others, in the ardour of early youth, who had entered upon the studies of the schools, and in the new life had been caught in the fascination of knowledge, had lost for the time being the desire for food or the care for shelter. They had fasted and slept out of doors, indifferent to consequences, so that they might gain this insight into mysteries. Possibly He had been in a like ecstasy. Later on, in the conflict in the wilderness with Satan, particularly known as the Temptation, such was His intensity that hunger did not affect Him till the end of the forty days. A like experience or tendency is evident in His spending on the mountain whole nights in prayer. All else save the one thing passes out of His mind. On this occasion, the voice of Mary recalls Him. He recovers Himself, and discerning the fear and sorrow that He had caused those whom He loved so well, in gentleness and affection He replies to His mother's question by asking, "Why did ye seek me?"—as though they had no confidence in Him, and in His ability to take care of Himself; "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" Perhaps, not so long since, the question of the future occupation of the Child Jesus had arisen in the home at

Nazareth. The parents may have supposed as a matter of course that He would drift, as most boys drifted, into the trade or calling near at hand, customary as it were to the family. He was not so inclined. Rather than the calling of the carpenter, He may have desired the life of the teacher or rabbi. Quietly and persistently He had urged the vocation which He believed God had given Him ; and everywhere and at all times He had sought to learn the things which would enable Him to answer efficiently that vocation. They had treated this desire as though it were no more than a boyish fancy. They had not realized that He had grown to know God as His Father,—not, we repeat, in any peculiar or exclusive sense, but as any thoughtful child would come to know Him,—and He must needs concern Himself with that Father's affairs. If there is any contrast intended between the fatherhood of Joseph and the fatherhood of God, it probably does not go beyond that which ever lies between the physical and the spiritual, the secular and the religious. The claims of God were paramount, as Joseph and Mary should have remembered. Did they not know, that even to a child, there comes a Voice and there are duties which are superior to all other obligations? More than this would imply, that at this time the consciousness of the unique and personal relationship between the Father and the Son had come to the Child. We do not know ; but it would seem that the revelation of that truth was made at the time of the Baptism

Certainly, when the words were spoken, the parents did not understand their meaning. They discerned neither rebuke nor comparison. Both the Child and His sayings were for them an enigma which baffled explanation.

Christ makes the sacrifice of submission.

In these first recorded words of our Blessed Lord appears the disposition of His whole life. In His childhood, as well as in His ministry, He ever concerned Himself in His Father's business. That was His sole mission ; the one thing that He did. The supreme and momentous oblation at Calvary was the crowning act of a life which had been one continuous sacrifice. The preparation for that greatest possible act of immolation was itself a constant denial of self, and a living death unto sin. At this time, He lets go the opportunity of so much happiness and enlightenment, and submits Himself to those laws which if a man would lead others to observe he himself must first keep. It is at least plausible, that more than merely withdrawing from the presence of the rabbis added to the difficulty of the surrender. In those days, as in later times, masters parted with reluctance from scholars endued with parts so exceptional and so promising as the Child Jesus manifestly possessed. Possibly some attempt was made, some offer tendered, that He might remain in Jerusalem and pursue the studies which might make of Him a rabbi like unto Hillel. That remarkable man had risen from a poverty greater than any that we are justified in thinking was experienced in the Holy Family, and attained to the highest

position possible for a teacher of the law. But if such inducement was extended, it was set aside. Not only was it necessary that this Child should keep the commandment of obedience, but He may not receive the preparation for His life's work in the schools of tradition and precedent. He must grow up in the fresh and genial atmosphere of Galilee, among the birds and flowers of the countryside, in sympathy with people who knew the toils and temptations of the common life, unhampered by the trammels of worn out customs, and not in the routine of academical pursuits, with men who felt but lightly, if at all, the throb and stress of the never-ceasing struggle to win or to maintain a livelihood or a position. From much that troubled men elsewhere, the priests and rabbis of Jerusalem were sheltered; and their life became correspondingly circumscribed. They had depths of learning, but no breadth of thought. For their work and purpose no training could have been better; but for Him, who should have a message for all men, who should be not only the Messiah of Israel, but also the Saviour of the world, none could have been more inadequate. So He turned His back to Jerusalem and went with His parents to Nazareth, and "was subject to them."

Jesus develops according to the law of human nature.

The Evangelist closes his narrative with a general statement of the growth intellectually and physically of the Child Jesus. This growth differed nothing in kind from the growth common to humanity. He develops naturally, and not

miraculously, or in any unprecedented manner. We should rid ourselves of every fancy that would lead us to picture our Blessed Lord as other in His human nature than perfect man. The grace of God was upon Him, as that grace is upon every child who would do his Father's will, and as man He needed that grace, or it would not have been given Him; and like other children Jesus increased in favour with God and man. We may not understand the union of the divine and human natures in the one person, but we must not allow ourselves to detract from the perfection of either nature. In becoming man, He subjects Himself to every law or principle which controls the nature of man. He is born, He passes through the stages of infancy, childhood, youth, and maturity, and He dies, in every particular as do all human beings.

The value of the so-called "Apocryphal Gospels."

This incident of the Visit to Jerusalem is the only break in the silence of probably more than thirty years, between the return from Egypt and the baptism in Jordan. The Evangelists found no traditions of Jesus belonging to that period of time: but as early as the second and third centuries, and more freely within the next two hundred years, attempts were made to supply the missing parts of the sacred biography. Narratives, which have since been denominated "Apocryphal Gospels," told the story of a childhood full of marvels, in which Jesus not only said wonderful things, but also wrought most surprising miracles. If these were written as

history they may be set aside without consideration. Had the events they record really happened, they would have been known in the days when the canonical Gospels were written. But if they are to be regarded, as they can only be regarded, as fictions, they are valuable as showing what the age in which they were produced thought the Child Jesus should have been. These are the things He should have done, and the words He should have spoken. It is needless to say that the conception thus formed of our Blessed Lord differed widely from that which is commonly held in this age, and which has been advanced in this study. The compilers of the whole series of apocryphal Gospels held that our Lord was from the beginning fully conscious of His deity, pre-existence, incarnation, and divine powers. He not only knew these things, and His parents not only believed in His possession of them, but He exercised His omnipotence, and His parents expected Him to do so. It is true that some of the miracles said to have been wrought by Him in His childhood or youth are trivial and even stupid, but, on the other hand, some are beautiful in sentiment and really expressive of His character and teaching. Only even these are the products of minds which appreciating that character and teaching supposed them to be what He would have done had He done anything. These writers saw no incongruity where we discern only impossibility. They seem to have thought that Christ could have lived a perfectly human life, and

yet be Himself fully aware of His deity; and could have been recognized as God by His parents and others who came into contact with Him, and yet be treated as a fellow being. That to Him such consciousness came in after life is not to be questioned; but we cannot think that as a babe, a child, or a youth, He had any such knowledge, or that His mother or any one else supposed that He had a right to such consciousness. Therefore we set aside the apocryphal Gospels as a collection of fabulous stories, though we admit that they indicate the opinion held of Him by those who wrote them. And we value that opinion as so much testimony to His divinity; and yet conclude that the opinion, even if true in the long run, rested in this aspect of His life upon unsound conjecture.

The value of the canonical narratives of the Infancy.

As a matter of fact we know nothing of our Lord's life during those years of silence. And it is not to be forgotten that of the incidents of His infancy which have been preserved in these early chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, none of them is so much as referred to in other parts of the New Testament, and none, save the assertion of the Virgin-birth, appears to have any influence on the development either of the Christ life or of Christian doctrine. Interesting and precious as they are for their associations and the customs and legends which have arisen from them, with the single exception just named, they might be left out of the Gospels without impairing our appreciation of the Lord Jesus, or the principle and growth of religion. The

This is also true of other parts of the Gospels, so that the fact is of little worth.

Virgin-birth is all-important, and we would not let go the charm of the Christmas stories, nor do we desire to suggest a doubt as to the historicity of any one of the incidents we have considered, but we may not attribute a greater value to these chapters than really exists. We believe in them, and love them ; and yet, beyond their testimony to the mystery of the Conception and the fact of the Nativity, we do not think them of indispensable worth.

The progress to maturity of the Child Jesus not unnatural.

When, then, we endeavour to picture to ourselves the youth and development of Christ, we enter upon speculations which at the best can be no more than plausible. He must have developed ; but we can go no farther than consider the conditions of the development. Such conditions as those of country, social position, friends, occupation, and educational facilities, can scarcely fail to influence and mould life. Environment is of no less importance than heredity ; and if we venture to consider that of the Child Jesus, we may find some suggestions of the process by which He was prepared for His mission.

He was brought up in the country.

We may indeed trace the effect that Galilee had upon His character in that familiarity with nature which manifests itself so clearly in His teaching. He spoke of the habits of the birds of the air and the beauty of the flowers of the field ; He had seen the foxes in their lairs, and knew of rains, and floods, and storms ; He had

watched the sowers on the hill-side, the fishers on the sea, the oxen at the plough, the labourers in the vineyards, and the toilers under the heavy yoke; and He drew lessons from the red sunsets, the harvests ready to reap, the grinding of the mill stones, the bramble bush, the husks that the swine did eat, the ravens and sparrows, and the sheep lost in the wilds. Many indeed are the allusions, which could have been made only by one who was in touch with rural life. We may turn, therefore, to the land where He grew up, and thereby bring more vividly to mind, not only one of the means of His preparation, but also the scene and background of much of His ministry.

Of the place called Nazareth.

It does not follow because the village of Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament, in Josephus, or in the Talmud, that it did not exist in the time of our Lord. It was a place without a history. The name itself has been taken as the designation of a region rather than of a place: indeed, practically as synonymous with Galilee. Thus in St. Peter's Denial, one maid speaks of "Jesus of Galilee," and another maid of "Jesus of Nazareth." The consensus of Jewish opinion was that neither the Messiah nor any prophet could come out of Galilee; and Nathaniel accepts that conclusion, when he asks, if the Holy One can come out of Nazareth? But it is a venture to suppose that Nathaniel regarded the names as equivalents, or that the damsels in the court of the high priest thought

Matt. xxvi. 69, 71.

John vii. 41, 52; i. 46. See the subject discussed in art. "Nazareth," in *Ency. Biblia*; also *cf.*

of them as such: though they might have been justified in so doing. However, let that be as it may, that there was a town so named in Christ's time is sufficiently proved by the evidence of the New Testament; and if it be supposed that it is not mentioned in any Jewish writing before A.D. 900 because of its insignificance, it should be remembered that the Evangelists speak of it as a city (πόλις), and not as a village (κώμη). The designations were rather loosely used, but generally speaking "city" meant a town surrounded by walls and having certain privileges of self government, in contrast to "village," which was not so favoured. Nazareth may not have been thus privileged, but it was certainly large enough to have a synagogue of its own, and through it passed one of the three caravan routes from Ptolemais or Acco on the sea to Damascus. It could not have been therefore a "stagnant pool of rustic seclusion." The origin of its name is as uncertain as its exact site: and of the site it may be said, that the modern town, which contains about ten thousand inhabitants, has an extremely doubtful right to be considered as occupying the place on which stood the Nazareth of the New Testament. In brief, no credence need be placed in any of the localities or relics pointed out to pilgrims and tourists as associated with the life of Jesus. Until the reign of Constantine it had none but Jewish inhabitants,—a fact which is absolutely fatal to the so-called traditional sites in the present town. Possibly the one spring in the

Passion of Christ, p. 75.

Herford's *Christianity in Talmud*, p. 52.

Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, i. 147.

Cf. *ante*, p. 350.

Ency. Biblia, iii. 3358.

neighbourhood is that which was frequented by the Child Jesus and His mother. After the Moslem ravages, and the expulsion of the Franks, in which the buildings erected by the Crusaders were destroyed, the place was without importance till late in the eighteenth century.

The region round about Nazareth.

In the time of our Lord Nazareth stood, probably not far from where it now stands, on the hill side overlooking the broad plain of Esdraelon, about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean. It was a few miles from Cana, and nearly three times as far from Tiberias. The whole region is one of beauty and interest, and at certain seasons, even now, though the withering hand of Islamism still lies upon it, a more delightful district, rich in the elements that gratify the senses, can scarcely be imagined. Greater, indeed, must have been its glory in an age when the land was cultivated and the wide, spacious valley to the south and west contained innumerable farms and vineyards and orchards, luxuriant in foliage, fruit, and grain. Beyond the pleasant hills to the north-east lay the waters on the shores of which our Lord spent most of His ministry, and probably a large part of His life. Nazareth would be more likely to be in closer touch with that neighbourhood, the centre of Galilean business and enterprise, than with the towns and villages beyond the plain. At all events, there our Lord began His ministry, and from there came most of the men whom He called to discipleship. In reading the Gospels, one feels

that He knew that country, its towns and people ; and that which in His youth He learned to understand went to the formation of His character.

THE SEA OF GALILEE.

The scene is one of rarest beauty. Along the shore appeared village after village, the inhabitants of which were engaged largely either in farming the uplands, or in industries connected with fishing. Trees and bushes grow in the hollows of the hills and down to the rocks and pebbles upon which broke the clean, clear waters of the Lake. The Lake, dotted with dark brown sails, and shadowed by bluffs and capes, behind which rose the heights of Galilee and Gaulonitis, and to the north the snowy summits of Lebanon, had charms like unto those which have made famous even less favoured scenes in other lands. "Seven seas," said the Lord, according to the rabbis, "have I created, but of them all have I chosen none save the Sea of Chinnereth." In those days the resources of this region were used to the best advantage. If, as travellers affirm, the saddest country in the world is the district round Jerusalem, the happiest, brightest, and greenest was that near the Sea of Galilee. The plain of Gennesaret, which ends near the generally accepted sites of Capernaum and Bethsaida, has been called the Garden of Palestine, and its beauty of landscape, even though denuded of the woods which once adorned it, its colours, its bordering hillsides, in the spring-time covered

with flowers and alive with birds, and its busy, little towns make it worthy of all praise.

Josephus extols the beauty of this sea.

The Lake is nearly thirteen miles long, and its greatest width is eight miles. It lies in a basin, or rather trench cut deep in the earth by the Jordan, 680 feet below the level of the sea; and the temperature of the country near by is almost tropical. But the waters fresh from Lebanon, and the winds which ever and anon gather to them, temper the great heat, and make the shores comparatively pleasant. On these shores were at least nine cities, each having a population of not less than 15,000, and some more. Josephus, writing about A.D. 75, not fifty years after the Crucifixion, gives a description of the Lake, and of that part of Galilee in which it is set.

Wars II. x. 7, 8.

"Now this lake of Gennesareth is so called from the country adjoining it. Its breadth is forty furlongs, and its length one hundred and forty; its waters are sweet, and very agreeable for drinking, for they are finer than the thick waters of other fens; the lake is also pure, and on every side ends directly at the shores, and at the sand; it is also of a temperate nature when you draw it up, and of a more gentle nature than river or fountain water, and yet always cooler than one could expect in so diffuse a place as this is: now when this water is kept in the open air, it is as cold as that snow which the country people are accustomed to make by night in summer. There are several kinds of fish in it, different both to the taste and the sight from those elsewhere. . . .

"The country also that lies over against this

lake hath the same name of Gennesareth; its nature is wonderful as well as its beauty; its soil is so fruitful that all sorts of trees can grow upon it, and the inhabitants accordingly plant all sorts of trees there; for the temper of the air is so well mixed that it agrees very well with those several sorts, particularly walnuts, which require the coldest air, flourish there in vast plenty; there are palm trees also, which grow best in hot air; fig trees also and olives grow near them, which yet require an air that is more temperate. One may call this place the ambition of nature, where it forces those plants that are naturally enemies to one another to agree together: it is a happy contention of the seasons, as if every one of them laid claim to this country; for it not only nourishes different sorts of autumnal fruit beyond men's expectation, but preserves them a great while; it supplies men with the principal fruits, with grapes and figs continually, during ten months of the year, and the rest of the fruits as they become ripe together through the whole year: for besides the good temperature of the air, it is also watered from a most fertile fountain."

Of the city built by Herod Antipas, and named after the Emperor.

While business gathered rather towards Capernaum than to other places, so that that city became even more cosmopolitan than they, Tiberias, about nine miles to the south, built by Herod Antipas, entirely on a Greek model, was the capital of the province and the seat of government. Besides an imposing citadel, it possessed a palace and a forum, and was surrounded by a wall three miles long. Here dwelt the Tetrarch, his courtiers and officials; and here in noble houses and extensive gardens, following as closely

as possible the customs and fashions of Rome, and not unaffected by Egyptian influences, wealth and power displayed their splendour. Antipas reigned magnificently and hospitably; and in the streets of his city a subservient populace saw the retinues of princes and lords from abroad, the gleaming armour of his own soldiers, processions of tribute-bearers, and merry-makers, chariots, and horses,—wonderful to look upon, and indicative of a luxury and ambition remote from the dwellers in the regions which perforce contributed to this pomp and extravagance. Into this city, perhaps owing to its preponderating foreign population, and to its having been built on the site of a graveyard, and therefore to the Jews unclean, our Lord does not appear ever to have entered; and the city itself is only mentioned once in the Gospels (St. John vi. 23).

Nor does Christ appear to have visited the health-resort or sanatorium close by. Outside the walls, about thirty-five minutes' walk from the southern end of the city, are some hot springs, four in number and with a temperature of 144°, the waters of which possess medicinal qualities, and which were known in old Hebrew times by the name Hammath, later by the Greek name Emmaus, and to-day by the Syrian Hummân. To these baths, long before the Christian era, patients gathered from all parts of the East. Indeed, they were famous throughout the ancient world. Pliny refers to them, as well as Josephus. Nor have they lost any of their efficacy, or much

Of the Baths of Tiberias: See G. A. Smith's *Hist. Geog.*, p. 450; and David Smith's *Days of His Flesh*, p. 85.

of their popularity. It is possible, that when invalids there heard of the wonderful cures wrought by Christ at Capernaum and elsewhere in Galilee, and losing hope of remedy at Emmaus, as must sometimes have happened, they may have had themselves conveyed to Him, and thus have helped to make up the large number of sick and impotent folk whom in His Galilean ministry He healed. The existence of these wells may have had something to do in changing the prejudices of the Jews against Tiberias; though the fall of Jerusalem probably had more. At any rate, in time Tiberias became one of the four sacred cities of the Jews, and had not only thirteen synagogues, but also a famous school of rabbis, by whom the "Jerusalem Talmud" was compiled. But though the Evangelical narratives are not concerned with these places, yet in the time of our Lord they were known far and wide; and no small proportion of the business of Capernaum and other trading ports of the Lake depended upon supplying their requirements. Such was the importance of Tiberias, its court and its adjacent baths, that one wonders, if the Gospels are to be regarded as unhistorical, how the writers avoided setting some of the scenes of our Lord's life there. For legend and romance the neighbourhood would have been irresistible; and in the second century its evil repute had given way to undisputed favour.

The inhabitants of Galilee.

The population near and round the Sea of Galilee at this time was both large and mixed. Jews, Phœnicians, Syrians, Arabs, and Greeks

pursued their several avocations side by side, not always peacefully it may be taken for granted, with little intermarriage of the races, and few changes from one religion to another; and yet there must have been much exchange of ideas, some imitation of habits, and in times of stress no unimportant union of common interests. The age and the country were disturbed by many theories, affecting religion, politics, social economy, and commerce. The land was in unrest. Galilee then was verily "an immense furnace wherein the most diverse elements were seething."

The troubles of a congested region.

Had there been no other difficulties, the feeding, clothing, and housing of a population so varied and condensed, and in an era of prosperity developing so rapidly, must have occasioned no little anxiety, even as they occupied the time and energy of the multitude. Reserved wealth, certainly in forms such as make modern life at least comfortable, was then practically unknown. Perhaps the greater part of the community needed less. But even in a climate such as that of the lowlands by the Lake, and among people used to hardship and privation, there are some things absolutely necessary. The demand for these was ceaseless, and the effort to supply that demand led to a rivalry not unknown in times when transportation is easier, and markets are in touch with each other the world round. Competition in business became as fierce as it was probably unscrupulous. In that conflict

men made great gains, and sometimes lost their own souls. And many fell by the wayside; while, as ever, the commonalty went on, some happy and indifferent in their poverty, and others discontented and desperate under ills from which no human device could free them. The trader, however, being ambitious and having foresight, would do more than merely live. Like the artisan and the husbandman, he had more interests in the world than even gain. Society was complex, as it has ever been; and life was made up of labours, dreams, struggles, pleasures, sorrows, triumphs, and failures, as it is to-day. The towns along the shore and on the hills worked hard for more than trade. Their narrow, winding, lane-like streets, unpaved, undrained, through which no burden passed save on the shoulders of slaves or the backs of beasts, silent when the sun beat in remorseless heat upon the white and grey walls of cottages and huts, unlighted in darkness, were crowded in the cool of the day with hordes of men, women, and children, strangely and scantily clad, some bustling and garrulous, some hungry and tired, all eager to find news, amusement, food, or kindred souls. Noise and confusion reigned. Then the dreamer told his dream, the singer sang his song, and the plotter, thief, and spy furthered their devices, while the folk who had failed, or whose years had enfeebled them, looked hopelessly on, wondering, perhaps, if the life beyond had in it anything worse than the worst they had known. And thus beautiful and wonderful as the country

was, in these towns and villages, probably as intensely in Nazareth as elsewhere, the battle and tragedy of life went on, in some particulars more cruelly than is common after these nineteen centuries.

The political conditions in Galilee.

The absorption of the kingdom of Herod the Great in the Roman Empire, resulting in Herod Antipas and Herod Philip reigning rather as tributary princes, if not as viceroys, than as independent sovereigns, and Judæa being governed directly under a procurator, had brought about results which even when beneficial were felt to be irksome. Protection from invasion had indeed been secured, and brigandage while not entirely suppressed was dealt with by a strong hand, but taxation had increased and had become more thoroughly systematized and enforced, and the provinces not only had to maintain their own princes and governments, but also had to contribute to imperial demands. Tacitus states that in A.D. 17, "the provinces of Syria and Judæa prayed to be relieved from the burden of oppressive taxes." The price paid for inclusion in the Roman Empire fell heavily upon the trading and labouring classes, and led to much ill-feeling towards the existing political conditions. Moreover, princes such as Herod Antipas were apt to regard the court and fashions of Rome as ideal, and instead of considering the circumstances and traditions of their own people, indulged in customs that were foreign, and in a mode of life that involved oftentimes ruinous extravagance and expenditure. They had them-

selves the power to tax and exact tribute independently of the imperial authorities, and the only limit to their demands seems to have been the ability of the people to meet them. The masses may have been practically powerless in the presence of armed men, and of citizens who throve upon the governmental methods and were interested in maintaining them, but they were not altogether inarticulate, nor did they submit without some effort to free themselves from the yoke.

How the taxes were gathered in.

The manner in which the imperial and provincial revenues were collected had lost none of its grinding hardships by long use. Neither the poll-tax, which was levied alike on man, woman, and slave from youth up to the age of sixty-five, nor the property tax, nor yet the customs or the income tax, nor any of the remaining forms of taxation, which varied according to the ingenuity of the government, were taken up by officials, but by lessees. These lessees had paid down a set sum for their respective districts, and naturally were desirous of making for themselves as much more as possible. The tariffs and schedules were indefinite, probably with a view to this system of collection, and abundant opportunity was left for the arbitrariness and rapacity of the tax-gatherer. Nor do Jewish tax-gatherers seem to have been more trustworthy or more respected than Gentile. They and sinners were classed together. The people hated them ; even though the people, like the people of other lands and ages, invented and contrived ways and

means of defrauding the revenue. Possibly the publicans had little kindly feeling towards, say, travellers or dealers who sought to circumvent the impost, as rabbinical authority informs us they did, by such devices as "a walking stick with a secret place for pearls."

The occupations of the races.

Conditions such as these could not have made for the peace and happiness of the community. Ever and anon occurred outbreaks, which, though checked with unflinching severity, did not diminish the assurance of grievance and wrong. Nor did the race question improve matters. The Jew had as little to do with the Gentile as possible, and the Gentile saw all the disagreeable qualities of the Jew, and rarely any of his nobler traits. Yet, in Galilee at least, intercourse had to be more or less frequent and friendly. For instance, the influence of the enterprising and aggressive Greek penetrated every part of northern Palestine. The commerce of the country was largely in his hands. Many of the technical terms used in trade were of Greek derivation; and though Aramaic was the common language, yet some knowledge of Greek must have been widespread, if for nothing else but business purposes. Thus the curing of fish seems to have been peculiarly an occupation of Greeks. The fishermen of the Sea of Galilee were Jewish, at least as a rule, but they conveyed their draughts of fish to the Greek town of Taricheæ, where the processes of drying and salting or pickling were performed, and whence shipments were made to all parts of the country.

Barrels of these prepared fish were taken to Jerusalem, to Damascus, round the Mediterranean, and to Rome itself. Few industries were more prosperous or better known. Besides these curing-yards, the brine for which was probably brought from the Dead Sea, Taricheæ had extensive shipbuilding works and employed many artisans. It seems to have been situated near the southern end of the Lake, about ten miles from Capernaum, but, like some of the other towns of that region, it is not mentioned in the Gospels. On the other hand, Josephus, who describes the place and its commodious harbour, never refers to Nazareth.

The causes of differences.

Beyond such contact as business necessarily involved, though they lived and worked frequently side by side, the Jew and the Greek had little concern and probably no sympathy for each other. More widely and more deeply, perhaps, than by race, they were divided by religion. Not that the Jew was more religious than the Greek, for the latter, like the Phœnician and other peoples called pagan, was a man of genuine devotion and of intense faith; but the devotion and the faith in the heathen and in the Jew were the result of opposite convictions. Whichever one was right, beyond all dispute the other was wrong. There was no alliance or compromise possible between them. The stronger the assurance, and the clearer the realization of the principles involved, so much the sharper and unyielding the repulsion and the antagonism. And in those days, to both Jew

and Gentile, religion was an ever-present, every-day affair. It was not confined to seasons or contingencies. It entered into all the concerns of life: not only those belonging to birth, marriage, and death, but also those which touched business, agriculture, travel, politics, art, and amusement. Before all other subjects, in conversation and controversy it held precedence; and from it came forces which in one direction made for peace and solidarity, and in the other for bitterness and strife.

Intercourse, however, compelled some modifications of differences.

Notwithstanding the strength of these religious differences, it was impossible for their advocates, living together so closely, and intermingling in business enterprises so constantly, to keep themselves entirely unaffected by the opinions and customs of their opponents. Proselytism was eagerly encouraged, especially by the Jews, who least of all the religionists of those times had any hope for the salvation of those who differed from them; and as a rule proselytes become the most virulent adversaries of the religion or sect they have forsaken. But even proselytes cannot altogether undo their early training and habits, and unconsciously, yet none the less really, they bring with them, and incorporate with their new religion or sect, sometimes helpfully, some of their former spirit and opinions. Thus, in an unexpected quarter, modification goes on. More than this, example and iteration, when consistent and earnest, have an influence which may be subtile, but is nevertheless active. Self-interest, too, is far from powerless; and

self-interest does not necessarily mean selfishness, but rather that concern which springs from love of wife, family, or friends, and is allied with prudence and thrift. Traders are not anxious to discover the extent of the differences which exist between them and the people with whom they are making their sales or bargains. In all ages, the prospect of gain has induced men to avoid revealing more than is necessary any opinion or practice that would endanger kindly feeling. If they are forced to declare their convictions, however outspoken they may be elsewhere, in the presence of those whose good will they would secure, they suppress as much as possible everything that might chance to be offensive. This habit which self-interest creates is apt to weaken the sense of differentiation, or at least to suggest that possibly extremes are not as certainly right as they are undoubtedly injurious.

Judaism in the north not as strict and harsh as Judaism in the south.

At all events, Galilean Judaism was far less severe in its teaching, and far less punctilious in its practices, than was that of Judæa and Jerusalem. Many differences of manners and customs existed between the Galileans and Judæans: more, perhaps, than their political separation would appear to warrant. The Jew of the south and the Jew of the north, not only had their own divergencies of dialect and of pronunciation, but they regarded each other as living in "another country," so much so that they applied to each other the principle which they held to be fundamental, that the wife is not

bound to accompany her husband to another country.

The physical attractions of Galilee.

That religion is affected to an appreciable extent by climate and topography appears more evident when comparison is made between Judæa and Galilee. The contrasts between the two provinces in these particulars are as marked as were the differences in their interpretation and practice of the same religion. We have already drawn attention to the delightful beauty of Galilee,—a cheerful, sunny land, in those days rich in trees and flowers, its valleys and hillsides cultivated even as gardens, watered by pleasant streams, and adorned by vineyards, orchards, and wheatfields, its climate comparatively genial, and its villages innumerable and picturesque.

The severity of Judæa.

Judæa is the reverse of all this. A plateau of about 1350 square miles in extent, nearly 55 miles long and from 25 to 30 miles wide, and between 2500 and 3000 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, it consists for the greater part of dreary, barren, stony moorland, featureless, fit only for pastoral purposes, with no hills to lift and an horizon without character or edge. Where towards its edges the plateau breaks, in the glen or ravine, olives, figs, and vines grow; once in a while the falling land broadens out, and broken by heathy mounds, red and green fields appear: but, as Professor George Adam Smith says, "the prevailing impression of Judæa is of stone—the torrent-beds, the paths that are no better, the heaps and heaps of stones gathered from the fields, the fields as

Hist. Geog., p. 307.

stony still, the moors strewn with boulders, the obtrusive scalps and ribs of the hills." There the cattle went down by dusty paths to some cistern in a shadowless gorge. Water was scarce. Outside of a few villages, and they poor and uninteresting, the population was sparse. Even though the eye caught glimpses to the west of the Great Sea, to the north the snows of Lebanon, and to the east the changeless blue of the Dead Sea and the changing colours of the heights of Moab, it was a country not to be desired. In such a region gloom rather than mirth prevailed, and bereft of the kindlier traits of nature, man would be more likely to grow up morose, harsh, and unrelenting than generous and light-hearted.

Of Jerusalem.

On the outskirts of this dry, unattractive, and lonely region, outside of the world's life, far from the main lines of travel, and as if in defiance of nearly all natural advantages, was founded the city of Jerusalem. Ravines from 400 to 500 feet deep lay to the east, south, and west of the city, and the heights on which the city itself was built were about 2500 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, some 36 miles off in one direction, and nearly 3800 feet above the Dead Sea, 14 miles distant in the opposite direction. Commerce which made other cities rich and important left it unaffected; nor, though comparatively easy of defence, was it adapted for military purposes. The difficulties of approach afforded it both security and isolation. Its traditions alone saved it from obscurity, neglect, and decay. But there, on Israel's holy

1 Chron. xi. 4-7; 2 Sam. v. 6-9.

hill, were the dwelling-place of the kings, and the temple where God manifested Himself and received the sacrifices of the nation. It was a city to be approached with awe. Mystery surrounded it, as stern as the walls which closed it in. The dignity of the temple corresponded with the severe and forbidding country near by. Few places have ever been so cut off from the world: none that attained to such rank and renown. Neither the allurements of nature nor the bewildering subtilties of strange civilizations were there to affect the manners and habits of the citizens, to distract the pilgrim from his devotions, or to make the ceremonies and teachings of the sanctuary seem archaic or peculiar.

The Holy City of Israel.

The city lived entirely for itself and by itself. Whatever trade it had was done for its own needs. It subsisted mainly upon the revenue derived from the multitude of Jews which came there at stated seasons, either to keep the Passover or to visit scenes consecrated by the deeds of their ancestors. For, isolated and proud as the religion of which it had become the centre, Jerusalem considered itself the custodian of traditions which were at once the delight and the hope of Israel. Here, if anywhere, the ancient ceremonies were performed in perfect order and with becoming glory. Here only, indeed, could sacrifice be offered to God. Here the law was interpreted and the prophets explained, as in no place else was possible. Neither Rome nor Mecca assumed to be more finished

exemplars of their respective creeds than Jerusalem did of Judaism. It and the wilderness near by produced teachers whose strait, uncompromising utterances were in decided contrast with those of men of the northern realm. This was the home of rabbinism, honoured above all other homes, and here Jesus of Nazareth was put to death.

The people of Jerusalem esteemed themselves superior to those of Galilee.

To a community such as that which dwelt in Jerusalem, proud of the position and fame of their city, to say nothing of buildings which the wealth and ambition of Herod the Great had given it, Galilee was a despised land: not, indeed, despised as were Samaria and the countries outside of Palestine, but rather as the Greeks at home reckoned the Greeks in their Sicilian colonies, and as modern cities are apt to look upon provincial towns and villages. There were folk of pure Jewish blood in Galilee; but generally speaking the people there were considered uncultured and ignorant, their religion had received adulterous taints, which without destroying it had made it inferior in quality, perhaps in zeal, and their manners and opinions were not to be tolerated, much less imitated. They had no temple; and the synagogue system, which there had been remarkably developed, by no means agreed with the more conservative tastes of priests and scholars who dwelt at Jerusalem. Nor had traditions as much weight with these people of the north. The scribe and the rabbi were indeed to be found in Galilee, but not in such numbers as at Jerusalem and throughout

Judæa. Priests were not unknown there, but as they exercised no functions save in the temple, they were only sojourners there ; nor were Sadducees commonly seen outside Jerusalem ; while it is probable that the Pharisees regarded Galilee as less congenial for the strict Judaism they professed than the southern province. In short, the Galilean was devout, though less familiar than the Judæan with the ritual and customs of the temple, and, while observing the law, he interpreted it, under the influence of his surroundings, more freely than the schools allowed. Though loving the Sacred Writings, perhaps more than some of the leaders of Judaism supposed, he learned as the Greek learned that Nature and the Common Life also had revelations for all who could read them.

Both Galilean and Judæan looked for the coming of the Messiah.

But though they differed in many particulars, the Israelite of Galilee and the Israelite of Judæa were one in their desire for the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, and in their hope of the Messiah. Both felt the burden of foreign rule and custom,—not so much equally in political or social oppression, for in all probability the Roman authority was less severe and more just than that of the native princes had been, but rather in the conscious loss of dignity, self-respect, and freedom. The country of their birth and love belonged to the stranger, and the stranger was not only of another race and came from beyond the sea, but he also worshipped gods and observed rites which to the Jew were

an abomination and to his land a desecration. The hope of the Jew, however, was well nigh as strong as his discontent. Despair did not wholly possess him. He loved his own, and he hated all who robbed him or threatened to rob him of his own ; and there were times when the latter passion exceeded in force the former. Never did he dream of resigning himself to conditions which he believed were contrary to the will of God. So he listened with enthusiasm and determination to the poets and prophets which told him of the coming day of deliverance, and of the Man who should be born to save them.

The growth of a more spiritual hope.

And yet, as the years passed by without the fulfilment of these predictions, to many in Israel came the conviction that repulsive as was that foreign domination, it was not the only, and possibly not the chief, cause of Israel's disappointment and misery. Changes of government do not necessarily make either for good or for ill ; and thoughtful people may have doubted if a return to national independence would have meant for the individual more freedom and happiness than came to him, either in Judæa under the direct rule of an imperial procurator, or in Galilee under a prince, who, subject to Cæsar, was bound to observe to some appreciable extent those principles of government which Rome had decided were necessary for peace and prosperity. External conditions scarcely affected, and seldom even ameliorated, the ills and inconveniences which seem to belong to human life. The roots of grief did not lie in

political or social systems. Wrongdoing and bereavement went on, no matter who sat on the throne, or how beneficial the surrounding circumstances. Indeed, to wrongdoing might be attributed the loss of national freedom which so many deplored. God may have punished Israel for evils wrought by Israel. In any case, sin was the cause of those defects of character which led to failure, shame, and sorrow. If so, then the enemy of Israel was not Rome, but Satan ; and Satan not only as an objective source of evil, but also as he entered into and became part of the life of man.

Many were ready for the Man of Righteousness.

Thus there sprang up a consciousness, which if not universal, was certainly widespread, that the Messiah foretold by the prophets should come to deliver His people from spiritual ills rather than from temporal disadvantages ; and that in freedom from sin would abide the strength which would enable man to bear up heroically, and to fight successfully against such evils as pressed upon him from without. Once in a while had risen a venturesome spirit, such as Judas of Gamala, who had rallied the people to insurrection ; but sedition of this kind had as its inevitable result defeat and death. As time went on and disappointments were repeated, men waited for another voice and another message. They no longer looked for a Messiah to redeem them from evils without, but from wrong within. The life itself purified and strengthened, then man himself could deal hopefully with things external. So Israel, not perhaps as

a whole, but the more devout and spiritually minded part, thought of the Kingdom of God which should be set up in Israel first, and then perhaps throughout the world: a Kingdom in which righteousness should be the pervading quality, sorrow should be changed into joy and adversity removed, and death itself should become a release to the weary and a hope to the living.

Environment not without its influence even on Christ.

No one could have lived in a country, and under conditions such as we have attempted rather to indicate than to describe, without being affected thereby, especially in the impressionable years of youth. The coming of spring, for instance, when the fields of Esdraelon were brilliant with flowers, and the streams rushed happily from the uplands to the depths of the valley, and the woods resounded with the cooing of doves, and along the hillsides farmers and shepherds and vinedressers were busily and hopefully at work, could scarcely have been without effect on the mind of Him who ever saw in nature manifestations of God. Our purpose in presenting these particulars is to induce the reader steadily to remember that our Blessed Lord grew up naturally, after the law of human life, and that the world in which His preparation proceeded was the same world in which they lived to whom He should personally minister. He knew the troubles which afflict humanity, not excluding those which arise from social derangement and political corruption. He had seen injustice, and had realized the inhumanity

of man to man. His knowledge of the character and habits of Herod Antipas, and His reprobation of the man, are shown in the epithet He applied to him : "that fox." The longing of His countrymen from the oppressions which lay so heavily upon them was familiar to Him ; and yet He seems to have taken a broader view of the political conditions than was common. As a matter of fact, Cæsar held rule, not simply because the empire had sought extension, but much more because neither Judæa nor Galilee was capable of governing itself. The princes through selfishness, luxury, and ambition had failed the people, and the people by division and shortsightedness had become weak. Tribute must be paid to Cæsar therefore, as of right, and not only as of compulsion. Thus in His ministry, He refused to associate His gospel or mission with political questions. His kingdom was not of this world. Perhaps, we may imagine that this separation of the spiritual from the secular, while chiefly necessary from the nature of His teaching, reflected somewhat the opinions which had been taught Him at Nazareth. If we hesitate to suppose that the message He gave the world was in any way shaped or coloured by His early training, we should call to mind that He came among men, not to live and act as God, but to be in every particular, save always that of sin, a man, and subject to the conditions of human development. The childhood and youth, therefore, could not have been without an influence, even upon that genius of spiritual

Luke xiii. 32.

power which undoubtedly was born with Him. We must eliminate from that humanity, as far as possible, all thought of the miraculous and supernatural. In the life at Nazareth no trend seems to have been given in the direction of social or civil discontent. He learned and He felt the ills of the common life, but He also knew that the most dangerous effect of those ills lay in their power to numb and deaden the apprehension of still greater ills. In the bitterness which possesses the souls of people when religion or government or social economy is in controversy, the recognition of moral duties and spiritual truth is apt to be neglected and forgotten. This fact is not without application to an age in which Christ is claimed to have favoured or to have condemned one class of society rather than another. He drew no line between rich and poor, princes and subjects, learned rabbis and ignorant peasants. He had not been brought up to differentiate humanity in this fashion. His sympathies went out to all, no matter what their position or ideas, who felt the need of freedom from sin or sorrow. This unfailing discernment, this great-heartedness, this all-embracing love, had their roots indeed in His very nature, but those roots received their culture in the home at Nazareth.

Christ, though helped by conditions, was no slave of them.

Again we remind the reader that it cannot be proved, that our Lord either lived in poverty or was brought up as a carpenter. We have already drawn attention to the fact that in His

ministry He made no allusion to the trade of His foster-father: the pastoral and agricultural life often, the carpenter's art never. It may have been from observation, rather than from actual acquaintance, that He spoke of the futility of patching old garments with undressed cloth, or of using again wine skins that had served their purpose. On the other hand, our Lord had learned to read and write, and such accomplishments even in those days were not usually found in poverty-stricken homes. Moreover He was familiar with the Sacred Scriptures, perhaps not so much with the Hebrew text, as with the Septuagint translation. This translation was to the Jews abroad and at home much that the Authorised Version is to English-speaking peoples. Hebrew was at this time a dead language, known only to the learned, and Hebrew manuscripts could be bought only by the very rich. Greek copies of the Bible were cheap; and while Aramaic was the vernacular of Galilee, Greek was almost as well known. Christ quoted the psalms and prophets formally from the Septuagint, and His utterances abound in expressions and phrases therefrom, showing His close knowledge of that version, and probably of the language in which it was written. Possibly much of His instruction was given in that tongue. It is uncertain whether in the synagogue the Scriptures were read in Hebrew or in Greek,—perhaps in Hebrew first, and then in Greek or Aramaic for the benefit of the congregation,—but both in synagogue and in school, like other

Cf. *ante*, pp. 107, 364.

Edersheim, i. 23.

youths, Christ would be made conversant with the inspired rolls. Not unlikely Jesus may have studied the Scriptures more carefully as a disciple in some rabbinical school: but if so, He did not acquire the rabbinical method of instruction. It is expressly stated that He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes,— as one who had a message of His own, and not as one who was merely an interpreter of another man's message. And in the substance and style of His illustrations, in His way of unfolding and expressing truth, in His vigorous denunciation of the principles of the oral law, such as those which had made the Sabbath, ablutions, and phylacteries a burden, and in His clear, outspoken, and convincing teaching of righteousness, He spoke independently and not as other men speak. He had thought for Himself, and the doctrine He preached, no matter what its source, had passed through His own mind, and rested upon its own intrinsic merits. It was true ; and He knew not only its verity, but also its application. Not in the schools, but in the working world ; not in the city, where men seek to make themselves copies one of another, and thereby evolve codes of thought and conduct largely artificial which must be obeyed, but in the country, where men are courageous enough to have opinions and habits of their own ; not in traditions which had waxed old and lifeless, but in the freshness of youth untrammelled, brave, and adventurous, He had that preparation which enabled Him to better the world, not only by

Matt. vii. 29.

John vii. 46.

Cf. *ante*, p. 366.

giving it a new religion, but by dying for its salvation.

The question of self-consciousness cannot be definitely answered.

It is not possible to ascertain to what extent, if at all, during those years of preparation, our Blessed Lord was conscious of His divine nature, though the question forces itself upon us, and legend practically assumes that He knew His origin and exercised His powers. As we have no historical material whatever to work upon, not a shadow of a suggestion of what He did or how He lived and developed in the many years between His early youth and His baptism by John, there can be no deductions, no conclusions, no certainty. We may conjecture, but in doing so we may not ignore the possibility of wandering from the fact. Nevertheless probability is not without its value ; and if probability be found to agree with fact, as soon as we have facts to deal with, we may reach a hypothesis at least helpful to the apprehension of our Lord's earthly life.

Our Lord's knowledge acquired according to the laws which govern all human acquirements.

This much is certain, that in assuming human nature the Son of God necessarily subjected Himself to its conditions : otherwise that nature would not have made Him perfectly one with His fellows. He could scarcely have been man, and yet have thought and acted as God. The growth in stature, in intelligence, in knowledge, in judgement, in self-control, must have been in Him as it is in every child of earth, or He would have been other than human. Had He assumed, as the painters endeavoured to depict

If we reiterate, it is because we hold this to be a crucial phase of the disputation.

Him assuming, kingship in the days of His infancy, and in the years of His youth authority over nature, and scholarship beyond that of experienced and learned doctors of the law, He would have been so exceptional as to have been to all who knew Him a perplexity and to Himself a wonder. He would not have known man, and man would not have known Him. Unless His human mind had in itself the attributes of Deity, omniscience, infinity, eternity, it could not have held the consciousness of God; and if it had possessed these attributes, it would not have been human. We do not question that as time went on, especially, perhaps exclusively, in the days of His ministry, there grew up in Him a consciousness of a relationship to the Deity peculiar and unique. The human approached more closely and more confidently the divine. It gained a development that would have been impossible had it not been on the verge of absorption into God. We say on the verge of absorption, though were it perfectly human it could not be absorbed,—that is to say, till the end of which St. Paul spoke shall have been reached when God shall lift up humanity absolutely into Himself, and thus be all and in all; and even this does not mean that humanity shall be either changed into God or destroyed. But Jesus came to live so near to God, to be so entranced by and wrapt up in God, that He knew and saw that which no other man has ever known or seen; and partly by revelation and partly by increase of grace and experience there

1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

came to Him a realization of a oneness with God such as no other human being could possibly possess. From the day of His baptism, for aught we know from even earlier years, His humanity was being gradually lifted up from the earth; and yet at no moment in His life, though He asserts an authority higher than man had ever before asserted, and claims an association with Deity such as no other man had ever claimed, does He ever fail to observe and maintain a certain subordination to the Father. "Equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching His manhood." As man He never acts independently of Him, but on the contrary not only prays to Him, and seeks to do His will and to glorify Him, but declares in unmistakeable language, "My Father is greater than I." "I can of mine own self do nothing."

John x. 29; xiv. 28; v. 19, 30.

This could not have been otherwise, even in Him who was God incarnate. For in taking to Himself our flesh and becoming one of us, He lays aside the consciousness of Deity, and lives within the consciousness which belonged to Him as a human being. What Jesus knew as God, He did not know as man,—and He is on earth as man and not as God. It is not a question of the relation of the infinite and the finite, as, for instance, how the infinite could confine itself to the finite, or the finite comprehend the infinite; but rather a matter of consciousness. We do not say that the Supreme Being gave up any of the attributes of His being, and certainly not

There is no confusion or conversion of the two natures in Christ.

Cf. *ante*, p. 65.

consciousness of Himself, but that in becoming man He did not bring into His manhood either the attributes or the consciousness of Deity. Nor may we confuse the question by supposing that as in the one person of Jesus Christ there were two natures, the two natures could so operate independently of each other, that at one moment Christ could think and act as God, and at another moment He could think and act as man. This would be to predicate two persons, each with its separate consciousness, united in one being or subsistence; and that would involve an unreality destructive not only of the Incarnation, but also of the fact of Jesus Christ. There is no "other self" in Him. If there were, then His humanity would be imperfect, in being superior in kind to that humanity which He condescended to adopt and died to save.

Our Lord knew nothing of the mysteries either of His life in eternity or of the manner of His coming into the world.

We do not think, therefore, that originally, or in any way other than by development, and consequently incompletely, that our Lord had any knowledge, for instance, either of His eternal generation or of His virgin-birth,—at all events, not till after the revelation at His baptism. Certainly no mention is made by Him of the Virgin-birth, or by any writer in the New Testament outside of the first two chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke. From the silence of the Pauline Epistles on the subject, it might be supposed that in the lifetime of St. Paul the fact was not generally known: but that is too uncertain for argument. Nor may the lack of any recorded reference by our Lord Himself be pressed too

far. Only it would seem most unlikely that He had been told anything about it. To what we have said on the subject we would add, with much diffidence, that the Blessed Virgin may have thought that though exceptional there was nothing extraordinary, and though a mark of divine favour nothing supernatural or miraculous, in the conception. She was young and innocent, her mind pure and uninformed, even though instinct led her to certain general conclusions: God could do whatsoever He willed. In this instance, if He willed that a departure should be made from common experience, it did not involve incarnation or any mystery of deity, but simply a special grace. Her Child should be remarkable for the work He should accomplish; but when she found that the work was not such as she had allowed herself to expect, she concluded that she had been mistaken in her Son, and she dismissed from her mind the question of conception,—regarding it, if we may say so without being thought irreverent, as a caprice of nature, and the vision of the angel as an idle dream. Even if she understood all that the modern physicist understands, it does not follow that she ever thought of her Son before the Resurrection as she and His disciples thought of Him afterwards,—God of God, one in substance numerically with the Father. Her knowledge came far short of any such realization of the laws of nature. We believe the conception to have been a fact and at variance with those laws: she may have accepted and experienced the fact, and yet not have

The Blessed Virgin herself may not have apprehended the singularity of the fact. Pp. 159, 164, 265.

recognized any departure from those laws, except as of special grace,—a grace which may have been given in other instances, for aught she knew. Later, when in the light of the Resurrection and the giving of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, she realized the truth of Jesus Christ, that He was indeed the Messiah, and more than the Messiah, the Incarnation of God, faith came back again, memory reasserted itself, reason entered into the mystery, and she knew that the vision was verity itself, the conception a supernatural and a unique event, and that she had given to the world, and had nourished and brought up, the Saviour of men and the Glory of heaven. But until He returned in the Ascension to the place where He was before, we may doubt if He knew aught of the secret of His birth.

Christ learns by natural development of His pre-existence. Cf. *ante*, p. 45.

Of His pre-existence, and therefore of His oneness with the Father, the sacred narrative enables us to gather that some assurance came to Him that He belonged not to time but to eternity, that indeed before Abraham was born He lived. This scarcely could have been before His baptism, and even then the revelation may have been at first but partially apprehended. The knowledge of its full meaning may have been gradual ; and it may have required courage to accept and apply such elements of the revelation which the human mind could take in. Thus, as a well-taught Israelite, Jesus would have had no doubt that in the mystery of God there were both Father and Son. The psalmists and prophets had spoken of the Son, perhaps importing

John viii. 58.

by the epithet less than we have come to think, but certainly enough to suggest that the title could be applied only to one Being, and He more than man. But though Christ knew this much, the conviction that He was that Son did not necessarily follow. He could hardly have acquired that conviction out of His own mind. He knew Himself to be man, a being the same as those among whom He lived, though He may have felt Himself separated from them by moral perceptions and spiritual aspirations. But for a man to exalt himself nearer to Deity than all other men, so near as to be practically indistinguishable, involved a serious presumption, and demanded some evidences external to himself; and the purer and nobler the man, the greater the hesitation to suppose such exaltation possible, at least for him. Our Lord being man, and withal a man who with His extraordinary grasp of spiritual things united every quality in its complete development which goes to make up the perfect and ideal man, would necessarily pass through every stage of wonder, perplexity, and growth which lay between the moment when first into His mind came the suggestion that possibly He, the Son of the woman Mary, was the Son of God, and the moment when He, the man Christ Jesus, reached the conclusion that He was such beyond all doubt. When the first intimation of this relationship occurred to Him we cannot possibly know; but if the postulate of His human nature be true, it is not unreasonable to suppose that by natural

Cf. ante, p. 46.

growth and divine revelation He attained the consciousness displayed so clearly and convincingly in the prayer before the Passion, and asserted so confidently after the Resurrection. There were years in His human experience during which He knew nothing of Himself more than other children and young men know of themselves; then came the time when glimmerings of the truth dawned upon Him, fitfully and uncertainly at first, afterwards more insistently, and step by step reflection and experience led Him to the fulness of knowledge, both of Himself, and also of the purpose for which He came into the world.

Cf. *ante*, p. 55.

OF THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

Some intimation of this progress from the unknown to the known appears when the long silence of the years of preparation is broken by His coming to John for baptism. Each of the Evangelists mentions the baptism: St. John rather as a reminiscence. They differ in the addition or omission of some particular, but agree closely in the principal facts. Thus St. Matthew records the hesitation of John to baptize One whom he regarded as so much better than himself: of this the other Evangelists say nothing. St. Luke implies that the baptism was performed after all the people had been baptized, probably in the evening, and states that our Lord was praying at the time the heavens were opened. He seems also to remove the uncertainty as to the meaning of the words "like a

Cf. *ante*, p. 75.

dove," used by all the Evangelists, by declaring that the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape, thereby implying that the words did not refer to the manner of the descent, but to the form assumed by the Holy Ghost,—the symbol of purity, gentleness, and benignity. St. Mark alone states that Jesus came from Nazareth. With St. Matthew he names the Jordan as the scene of the baptism; and with St. Luke he records the words spoken out of heaven as being in the second person. Neither St. Luke nor St. John describes the baptism: the other two speak of our Lord as coming up out of the water, and the manifestation of the Holy Ghost as occurring immediately. St. John lays stress on the continuance of the Holy Ghost with the Son of God: He not only descended upon Him, but He abode and remained with Him. Thus, while the baptism of John was with water unto repentance, the baptism of Christ became the means of conveying spiritual grace: the fire to purify from sin, to inflame with zeal, to impassion with love, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost to strengthen and sanctify. This abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, even if personal and not simply dynamical, must not be understood as conferring sonship on the Lord Jesus. If He were not the Son of God, nothing could make Him such. Nor would the entrance of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity into a human being, either personally or dynamically, convert that human being into the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Voice from heaven

did not say, "I will make thee, or I have made thee, my Son," but "Thou art my beloved Son," —not "in whom I shall be," but "in whom I am well pleased." The message is the recognition of an existing fact, and not a declaration of something now being brought about.

The popularity of John the Baptist.

By bringing together the several evangelical accounts we are able to gain some idea of the circumstances of the baptism. In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, which we take to be in the spring of A.D. 29, John the Baptist received in the wilderness the call to his mission. A weird, ascetic figure, like unto Elijah the Tishbite, clad in raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, he came into the country about Jordan, perhaps more definitely into the neighbourhood of Bethabara or Bethany beyond Jordan, and with an eloquence and fervour that attracted multitudes from all parts of Judæa, and especially from Jerusalem, he proclaimed the near approach of the Kingdom, and declared the necessity of preparation for it. His message thrilled and entranced his hearers. Never had preacher greater favour and repute. To learn of him what was required of them to constitute repentance came tax-gatherers and soldiers, as well as ordinary people; even some Pharisees and Sadducees drew near to him. Doubtless not a few in these thronging crowds were led to the Baptist by the hope of a kingdom that should be spiritual rather than temporal, and many more by the expectation that at last a deliverer was nigh who should save them

2 Kings i. 8.

from the foreign domination,—perhaps with the thought that freedom would bring about both political independence and spiritual regeneration.

Of the place of the Baptism.

The place of the baptism cannot be identified. It lay south of the Sea of Galilee and north of the Dead Sea, probably excluding that part of the river which flowed by Samaria. Tradition maintains the place to have been Makhadet el Hajlah, the ancient Beth-hoglah, in the Jordan valley near Jericho ; and the tradition is as old at least as the first half of the fourth century. Some scholars suggest that the site should be looked for at Makhadet 'Abâra, one of a number of fords in the Beisan plain, about twelve miles south of the Sea of Galilee ; and this chiefly because " Bethabara " seems to be connected with " 'Abâra." The best of the oldest manuscripts read " Bethania " instead of " Bethabara " ; and some authorities have supposed " Bethania " to be the equivalent of Batanea, the Greek form of the Hebrew Bashan, so that it indicated the country in which Bethabara was situated. This, however, is too uncertain for argument. But if Bethabara means the house of the ford or crossing, and Bethany the house of the ship, they may have been one and the same place ; and names so apt may have been given to more than one ferry or passage over the Jordan. Another conjecture is that the reading should be " Bethanabra," and in the Septuagint this name is used for the Hebrew " Beth-nimrah," that is, the house of limpid and wholesome water, a site well known, about ten miles east-north-

Joshua xiii. 27 ; Smith's *Dict. of Bible*, i. 416.

east from Jericho, in the Wâdy Sh'aib, close to a perennial stream which discharges into the Jordan near one of the regular fords not far above Jericho. Here was an abundance of water, and the place being on the direct and ordinary road from the capital was immediately accessible to the people of Judæa. But there are objections to this supposition, for while it would be convenient enough for priests and Levites from Jerusalem, it is not as likely to have been visited by men of Bethsaida, such as Andrew, Peter, and Philip, and by Nathaniel from Cana ; and was too far away from Cana of Galilee, where on the third day after the call of Nathaniel Jesus and these disciples were present at a marriage. Possibly John baptized in more places than one ; and the baptism of Jesus may have been at some other ford than Bethabara, wherever that ford may be placed. The narrative does not state that Jesus was baptized at Bethabara, but that priests and Levites came there from Jerusalem to interrogate the Baptist concerning his right to baptize ; and that there John pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God. The identification of the place, however, is of little consequence. This seems clear : that Jesus went from His baptism to the Temptation, and that later He found John preaching at Bethabara. By this time John had drawn to himself the attention of the authorities at Jerusalem, who sent a deputation to enquire into the nature of his claims and the purpose of his mission ; and if he had not already done so,

he would soon excite the ire of Herod Antipas, by denouncing his marriage to Herodias.

The order of events between the Baptism and the testimony of John.

The chronological marks in St. John's narrative imply that the events at Bethabara which he records happened after the forty days which Jesus spent in the wilderness immediately subsequent to His baptism. If so, at least six weeks had gone by since the meeting of the Baptist and the Messiah on the banks of Jordan; and that meeting would seem to have been not far from the desert into which straightway our Lord was driven by the Tempter. Tradition claimed as the scene of the Temptation a mountain near to Jericho, as high and precipitous, says Dr. Thomson, as the rock of Gibraltar, in the sides of which caverns had been hewn. Here both solitude and shelter could be obtained. But another conjecture takes our Lord to the Arabian desert of Sinai, where like Moses and Elijah He stood before the Mount of God. This conjecture would have greater probability if Horeb could be identified with one of the mountains in the region of Edom rather than with a mountain in the peninsula of Akabah. It is as unlikely that our Lord made so long and dangerous a journey to that remote district of Arabia, as it was possible for Elijah to have gone there when he was at the point of fainting at the close of a single day. Like the place of the baptism, it matters little: only the wilderness of the temptation does not seem to have been in the neighbourhood of Bethabara, if Bethabara were near the Galilean Jordan.

What John expected or recognized in Jesus.

John the Baptist knew himself to be the herald of the Messiah. Great as he was, not only in his message, and his dauntless courage, but also in the results which followed the delivery of that message, he looked forward to the coming of One greater than he: One so much greater indeed, that he felt himself unworthy to serve in the lowly and menial act of unloosing His shoe's latchet. Not only was he aware that he was neither the Christ nor the prophet whom Moses had declared God should some day raise up, but he was convinced that among his hearers sooner or later would appear the Man of whom the prophets spoke and whom Israel expected. He had no intimation of the Man. If he had ever met the Son of his mother's kinswoman, he had no suspicion that He was the Messiah. He may have heard of the beauty and purity of His character; or there may have been such evidences of that beauty and purity in the person and demeanour of Jesus, that as soon as he saw Him he discerned Him to be superior morally and spiritually to himself. But whether by experience or repute or intuition he knew this much of Jesus, he anticipated no more. Only he had been given a sign: that of the opening heavens and the descent of the Spirit of God. The man upon whom the Spirit should abide was the One who should redeem Israel and bring in the kingdom of God. This does not imply that John the Baptist thought of the Messiah as the Incarnation of God; or that he imagined aught of pre-existence or virgin-

Cf. *ante*, p. 75.

birth. To him Christ was the Son of God, but for him the term could scarcely have meant all that the early Church believed it to mean.

That John should have hesitated to baptize One whom he perceived had no need of repentance has occasioned in other minds the question, why Jesus should have come to him for that purpose. We have already quoted one of the fragments of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* which reads: "Behold, the Lord's mother and brothers said to him, John the Baptist is baptizing for remission of sins; let us go and be baptized by him. But he said to them, What sin have I done that I should go and be baptized by him; unless perhaps what I have now said is ignorance?" An intimation of the early date of this gospel may be found in the reference to the family circumstances of Christ and to His self-depreciation. Though unconscious of any sin, He was humble enough not to make the claim of sinlessness. So in Mark x. 18, "Why callest thou me good?"— which, however, may be interpreted otherwise. The answer of Jesus to John suggests resignation, as though He gave Himself up to an act which though for Him unnecessary had nevertheless a purpose. "Suffer [me, or it] as yet: for thus it becometh us [*i.e.* me and thee] to fulfil all righteousness." The words "Then he suffered him," imply that the pronoun to be supplied in the words of Jesus should be in the first person. But this constraint which Jesus felt may not have come from any persuasion of

The reason for the Baptism: *cf.* pp. 75 *sqq.*

P. 77.

See p. 68.

His mother or brethren, but rather from His own impulse to submit Himself as man to every ordinance of man, and especially to one which symbolized the cleansing of sin. And yet the request of Mary and the brethren that He should go with them to a baptism for remission of sin, suggests that pure as we believe His life to have been, they had discerned in it nothing extraordinary. They thought of Him as one with themselves, for whom baptism was appropriate, if not needed. This tradition could not have been invented after the fact of the sinlessness of Christ was recognized, even though the title of "Lord" applied to Christ and that of "the Baptist" to John were already in use. This fragment is probably among the oldest of all the written traditions of Christ.

The Baptism.

The canonical gospels, however, give no intimation of what happened before His coming to John. Apparently the day's preaching was done, and they who had received baptism had departed. In the cool and twilight of the day, John was alone. Suddenly, coming out of the gathering shadows, appeared a Figure. When the Baptist and the Stranger met, the Stranger asked for baptism. John not only endeavoured to dissuade Him, but seems to have tried to hold Him back. The question put by John and the answer made by Jesus appear in all the codices, and yet the suspicion lingers that they may have arisen from an effort to account for the baptism of One who had come to be known

as absolutely sinless. Be this as it may, the Elijah of the covenant led the Stranger down to the water, and there in giving Him the baptism for the forgiveness of sin, unconsciously numbered Him among the transgressors.

Cf. *ante*, p. 76.

The sign from Heaven.

The two men were alone; the shadows in the valley were waning into darkness. Jesus lifted Himself up from the water. He prayed; but the words had scarcely formed themselves on his lips, when from the heavens there fell upon Him a wondrous light, and He and the Baptist heard words which solved the doubts of the one and revealed the mystery of the other. The light was more than the light which the shepherds saw over the fields of Bethlehem, or Saul beheld on his way to Damascus; and differed in manifestation from the fire which consumed the sacrifice on Mount Carmel, and rested upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost. The Evangelists record it to be the very Spirit of God, descending with the grace and form of a dove, to bear witness to the Son of Mary that He was indeed the Son of God. "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—The One far above the "men of good will" of whom the angels sang.

The narrative in the Gospel of the Hebrews.

The account of this vision given in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* differs from the canonical narratives; and the differences are such as to suggest the question of priority. The fragment reads: "It came to pass when the Lord had ascended out of the water, the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit came down and rested upon him, and said

to him, My Son, in all the prophets I was looking for thee, that thou shouldest come, and that I should rest in thee. For thou art my rest; thou art my firstborn Son, who reignest to eternity." In this form of the tradition, the figure of the Dove does not appear, and the voice heard is not that of the Father, but of the Holy Ghost, who descends upon Jesus as in a flood or fountain,—that is to say, not necessarily of light, but of plenitude and power. Moreover, the Spirit while testifying that He was in the prophets of old, looking for Him in whom He should rest, declares that He has come now to abide eternally in Him who is His firstborn Son. The words ascribed to the Spirit need not be taken as other than a paraphrase of what was actually said, the substance of the utterance. Whatever the date of this gospel may be, it is next to certain that this fragment, like the former one quoted, could not have been invented; and either it was written earlier than the traditions recorded in the canonical Gospels, or those traditions were unknown to the author of the Gospel of the Hebrews. It may have been told by Jesus Himself to His intimate friends, setting forth His experience, perhaps in a symbolic narrative. Indeed, the whole story of the Baptism and Temptation must have been told by Jesus, for John the Baptist died long before the gathering of the traditions of our Lord began.

See Professor Menzies on the whole subject of the Gospel of the Hebrews in Hastings' *Dict. Ext. Vol.*

If the acknowledgment by God of the Sonship of Christ is not to be regarded as a revelation, immediate and unexpected, it is certainly a con-

The effect of the vision, as far as it can be ascertained, upon our Lord.

firmation of a truth which had been developing in our Lord's mind, possibly for many years. That which had been a conjecture or a hope now becomes a certainty; and yet the significance of the expression may not even at this time have been apprehended by our Lord in its fulness. As we have maintained, it was next to impossible for the human mind to take in so stupendous a fact. Not until the Sacrifice was accomplished, and so far as He was personally concerned the purpose of the Incarnation effected, did the human give way to the divine, and God not only lived but reigned in the body of the Man who had conquered death. But it is clear enough, that the words, "Thou art my beloved Son," uttered out of heaven itself, marked a crisis in the human life of our Lord, and denoted the power by which He should fulfil His mission. We speak with reverence and hesitation, conjecture taking the place of knowledge; but again we repeat the fact that our Lord had subjected Himself to the laws of human nature. The words from heaven were addressed to the Man Christ Jesus, and He responded to them as man. He felt Himself at once lifted to a higher plane of spiritual experience: not to be stripped of qualities which belonged to Him as man, but to have those qualities suffused and strengthened by an extraordinary grace, which brought Him into contact with God closer than the most exalted prophets had ever known. And yet, no sooner has He attained this knowledge than He feels Himself

impelled to put it to the test. The stronger the consciousness of the possession of the Spirit of God, the mightier the anxiety to confront the Adversary; and, on the other hand, we may conceive that after this recognition by God of the relationship of Jesus, and the approval of His work, the Adversary would gather himself together more determinedly than before, if possible to destroy the faith of the Man of Nazareth, and thus frustrate the purpose of God. In his malignancy Satan hesitated not to defy even the Almighty Himself. He had won in Eden and on many another field, and now he would attack Him whom God had owned as His Son.

The Temptation objective, but not material.

The reality of the Temptation does not depend upon the hypothesis of its material nature. It is not necessary to suppose that the devil appeared in bodily substance, and literally carried Jesus either to a pinnacle of the temple or to the top of a mountain. The Gospel of the Hebrews contains the following narration, ostensibly made by Jesus: "The Holy Spirit, my mother, took me just now by one of my hairs, and carried me away to the great Mount Tabor." This fragment appears five times in Origen and Jerome, and must have made a great impression; but it can scarcely refer to the temptation or to the transfiguration. A similar experience is recorded by Ezekiel: "He put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to

The Hebrew word for the Holy Ghost is usually feminine. He is spoken of by our Lord as masculine. For His personality see article in Pearson on the Creed.

Jerusalem." So in the addition to the Book of Daniel known as "Bel and the Dragon," it is said: "Then the angel of the Lord laid hold of Habakkuk by the hair of his head, and set him over the den in Babylon"; and after the prophet had given Daniel food, the narrative states, that "the angel of the Lord set Habakkuk down (in the place) whence he had taken him on the same day." But these passages can only be interpreted poetically. No one could imagine them to describe physical experiences; and the statement in the Gospel of the Hebrews, especially with the expression "just now," is reduced to an absurdity if it be considered literal.

viii. 3.

v. 36, 37.

The spiritual nature of the Temptation does not destroy its objectivity.

Nor does it follow because the temptation is explained as spiritual and not as material, that it was not an actual and an objective occurrence. It is not safe to predicate, because nothing was seen or heard, that the temptation sprang up in our Lord's own mind, or was caused by doubts which He Himself had created. We do not know how spirit acts on spirit: or, in other words, how we ourselves are operated upon by influences for good or for ill which come to us ever and anon, not from or through physical or material sources or means, or even by way of the senses. Unless we are prepared to deny the supernatural altogether,—and by the supernatural we signify that which is outside material phenomena, of a character and being other than physical, and therefore such as only the mind or soul can apprehend, — we cannot avoid holding the objectivity of spirit apart from our

own. God is a spirit: and though we may not be able to define spirit, yet we know Him to be a person, and not a personification. So we believe that confined within our bodily organism there is likewise a spirit: which is none other than the Ego or Self, the "I myself," and which remains for ever, not unaffected by death, because of the difference between embodied and disembodied conditions, but without the possibility of dying. And that which is true of God and of ourselves individually is also true, not only of all who at present are in the flesh as we are, and of the vast unnumbered multitudes who have been as we are, but also of sinless and benevolent beings who serve God, and of vile and hateful beings who league themselves with the archspirit of evil. How these spirits, either angels or demons, affect us we may not know; but that they do affect us we have reason to believe. Undoubtedly some natures are more readily influenced by them than others, just as some natures are more susceptible than others of the charms of art or music or poetry. They in whom the spiritual rather than the material predominates would more quickly and directly respond to spiritual powers. Our Lord we are expressly told was "full of the Holy Ghost," which at least means that He was in unqualified harmony with spiritual things; and this He could not have been had not the spiritual in Him been supreme.

That is, in His human nature, even before His baptism. The Holy Ghost was also supreme in men such as Stephen and Barnabas.

Now the Spirit of God had revealed or confirmed to Him the fact of His Sonship; and

straightway the fact is assailed by the Spirit of Evil. Within His soul begins a conflict, not so much on His part concerning the fact of which He has been made conscious, but really between God and Satan, between holiness and sin: He Himself being the battlefield in which shall be won or lost the world's hope and heaven's glory. That the conclusion was foreseen and determined did not make the struggle less real and terrible. And that which went on in the soul and mind of the Lord Jesus, again and again is enacted in the souls and minds of men and women who like Him have been made conscious of their relationship to God, and would do God's will. The war between the archangel and the dragon is ever going on, not on earth's plains, but within the hearts of men. It is inevitable; and thus our Lord was driven into the wilderness, carried away by an overwhelming and irresistible impulse, to be tempted of the devil. That which is in Him must be tried to the uttermost; and away from the haunts of men, from everything that might distract or divert His attention, He must realize all, and perhaps more than all, that man has to endure when he is rent and torn, perplexed and dismayed, in the struggle which can only end either in the salvation or the loss of himself. He who would save others, must Himself know what these others have to be saved from. On the one hand, angels ministered to Him, continuously St. Mark implies; on the other hand, He was with the wild beasts, not necessarily the denizens of the wilderness, but

The soul of Jesus the field of conflict between good and evil.

rather the spirits of evil, which could only be compared to ravenous and loathsome creatures hungering for His flesh.

The First Temptation: the appeal to His physical necessities.

The surroundings in which the temptation was carried on were formidable. In the wilderness, where no man dwelt, nature presented itself in its most savage and gloomy aspects. The mountains were forbidding; the valleys such as to strike the soul with terror. Loneliness and silence, or silence broken by the moan of the winds and the roar of falling waters, demanded much fortitude and courage, lest despair and despondency should overthrow reason itself. None but the strongest of minds and the bravest of hearts could endure the solitude and desolation,—a realm in which the mind could feed only upon itself, and find neither comfort nor encouragement in things external. Amid such scenes the truest of men were tried in every way that Satanic craft could devise. The weak fell; the strong only survived. If tradition may be trusted, in the desert where our Lord was taken, not only did these horrors stand out in boldest, most intimidating form, but serpents and other reptiles abounded, and on the ground were scattered stones that looked so like loaves of bread as to suggest food. But while revulsion and anxiety possessed our Blessed Lord, and the struggle held Him in its intensity, to eat was impossible. Yet so soon as the physical began to free itself from the spiritual, and hunger made itself felt, a new opportunity came to the Tempter. The form of the temptation was char-

acteristic. The Voice from heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son"; the Tempter did not deny either the experience or the fact, but would have Christ test His Sonship in directions that would have been for evil rather than for good. "If thou art the Son of God," then assert thy authority, satisfy thy hunger,—let go these reflections and meditations, these spiritual exercises, and attend to the physical necessities. In other words, Satan would have Him take His spiritual privileges for granted, use them for His own gratification, and enter into the enjoyment of the things of this world: he who thus gives himself up, passing into a death which may be slow, but is also inevitable. So the ancient legend represented the Tempter as urging the woman to eat; and Paradise was lost. Stripped of its figure, we may see in this, the power of worldliness, the indulgence of the animal side of our nature, and therein the destruction of that which makes us akin to God.

The Second Temptation: the appeal to the love of power.

The appeal to physical needs having failed,—in themselves perfectly lawful and holy, unless so used as to benumb and deaden the religious instincts,—the Tempter proceeds on the line of ambition. He creates in the mind of Christ a panorama as it were of the kingdoms of the earth. In a moment of time, says St. Luke, Athens and Alexandria and Rome, with many another famous city, pass before Him as in imagination He stands upon the "exceeding high mountain." To win that glory was within the scope of Christ's mission. The day should

come when the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. He could only save the world by winning the world to Himself; for in winning the world to Himself, He brought it back again into that righteousness which made it acceptable to God. These kingdoms over which the spirit of evil had lordship, Satan offers to relinquish on the sole condition that Christ should acknowledge the power of evil. Thus there need be no passion; Calvary could be avoided. "If thou wilt prostrate thyself to me, I will give up all claim to these realms." By so doing Christ would indeed have the title, but Satan would possess the suzerainty. Thus states and nations have been built up; and in the history of the kingdoms of this world much is written that cannot fail to occasion shame and regret. Rulers and leaders of men, and sometimes spiritual as well as temporal princes, have not always hesitated to adopt evil means to secure the purpose they had in mind. They have held that without such means government would be impossible. In a statesman a scrupulous conscience has been regarded as seriously detrimental to his success. But the kingdom of God could not be built up by the recognition or the use of the powers of sin. In that kingdom Satan can have no altar at which men may worship him. Even if the desire of Christ to establish that kingdom could be hastened by the performance of the condition on which Satan offered to surrender his rule over the kingdoms of the world, no compromise

We should not fail to recognize that evil has power; power, indeed, so great that again and again it has overthrown truth and frustrated righteousness.

could be thought of. The foundations of many of these kingdoms were laid in blood,—the blood of the slave, the soldier, the captive,—blood poured out in fierce anger and still fiercer covetousness ; the foundation of the Kingdom that shall never pass away, and in which righteousness and peace should eternally dwell, would rest on blood, too, but the blood would be for life, and not for death, a sacrifice of One who brings salvation to all men, and who never did a wrong.

The Third Temptation: the appeal to the religious instinct.

It matters nothing whether the order of the temptations as given by St. Matthew or as given by St. Luke be followed ; nor are we obliged to suppose that they came in rapid succession. Some time may have elapsed between each ; and the account given of each may be but a condensation of a struggle which may have lasted for days, and which may have assumed other forms than the one recorded, and have been supported by arguments designed to refute the objections brought forward by Christ. But of all the temptations none was more subtile than the one which appealed to the religious life. Satan would have Christ try whether God would keep His word, and thus by an act of presumption put God to the test. He suggested to Him a picture of the temple, perhaps, about the time of the morning or the evening sacrifice, when the courts were thronged with worshippers. No better opportunity could there have been, both of confirming the promise of God, and also of convincing Israel that the Messiah had come,

than by casting Himself down from a pinnacle of the temple before them all. If He escaped death, the proof would be unanswerable. And this certainly He who was the Son of God might hope to accomplish. Nor could there be a more desirable purpose, than by one act to win the confidence of Israel. But here again the end can be gained only by committing sin. The favour of God does not warrant presumption. Though acknowledged by Him as His own, and assured by Him of unending life, His people are not exempt from the laws of nature. They cannot set aside those laws with any prospect of immunity. They have no right to expect exceptional treatment,—or to be spared a single ill which destiny has allotted to them. Apart from the question whether the quotation made by Satan had any particular reference to Christ,—"knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private [*i.e.* special] interpretation,"—it is certain that no man is justified in supposing that God will work a miracle for him or exempt him from the laws which govern the universe. The answer of Jesus to the Tempter serves for all time: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

2 Peter i. 20.

Summary of the Temptations: as a guide to the Church.

These three temptations, prolonged it may be throughout the forty days, and probably selected out of the many with which Satan attacked our Blessed Lord, are descriptive of three evils which Christianity, if it would remain the religion of Jesus Christ, is bound to avoid. Or, to put the matter in the affirmative, the victory over

them indicated three qualities which Christianity should have. First, it should recognize the lawfulness of the physical life, but above it the spiritual requirements of man. It should have in it a sufficient element of self-denial, perhaps of asceticism, to save religion from being absorbed and destroyed in material things. Secondly, it should recognize the needs and ambitions of human society, while insisting that those needs should be satisfied and those ambitions secured only by means which commend themselves to the conscience of men and accord with the righteousness of God. And thirdly, that Christianity should be a sane and balanced religion: not a superstition, but a life and philosophy based upon reason and common sense. That we should regard law as the normal relationship between God and man, and not look to exceptional or miraculous means to bring about that which is necessary for our spiritual well-being. We have no authority for presuming upon our relationship to God; our duty is to walk humbly and obediently before Him. In this way we may take the three temptations of Christ as three outstanding guide marks of conduct. On these principles the religion of Christ should distinguish itself from all other religions, and win its triumphs: self-denial, righteousness, and sober judgement.

Satan attacks, and God confirms, the truth of Sonship.

Thus Jesus obtained that mastery over Satan which gave Him in His ministry such power over demons. It is significantly stated, that foiled and defeated in this attack, the devil left

Him "for a season." He would return again and again, and renew the struggle: for against this Man had gathered in terrible strength all the forces of sin, determined to defeat and destroy the righteousness which made possible the redemption of the world and the harrying of hell. But Jesus knew Himself to be the Son of God. Later on, in the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter and John and James heard a voice out of the cloud which enveloped them: "This is my beloved Son; hear him." St. Matthew adds: "in whom I am well pleased"; and the oldest uncials of St. Luke read, "my chosen Son." And again, in response to the prayer of Christ, that the Father would glorify His name, there came a voice from heaven, which some people thought was thunder, and others the utterance of an angel, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

Mark. ix. 7.

John xii. 28.

Legends of parallel temptations: See *Ency. Bib.*, art. "Temptation of Jesus," § 13.

A similar temptation to obtain power by unrighteous means is said to have been made to Zarathustra. According to the Zendavesta: "The guileful one, fearing the overthrow of his own empire, promises Zarathustra that if he will 'renounce the good law of the worshippers of Mazda,' he shall 'gain such a boon as Zohak gained, the ruler of the nations.'" In Iranian mythology, Zohak ruled the world for a thousand years. The temptation was resisted. So Gautama was urged to relinquish his search for truth, by the promise that in seven days the wheel of empire would appear, and would make Gautama sovereign over the four continents and

the two adjacent isles. Such temptations are common to men who would secure lordship and dominion, and whether true in detail or not these legends go to show that they who were affected by them not only were human, but were also able to resist evil even in the pursuit of their most urgent ambition. There is no reason for supposing that the tradition of our Lord's temptation came from these traditions, much less from myths wrought out of imaginary conflicts between the Light-god and the Storm-spirit, such as we have referred to in the section of this study on the massacre of the Innocents; or from "ceremonies of initiation," whereby a man was introduced into a new life, such as that of warrior or priest, or taught the secret of controlling spirits of evil. The temptation of our Lord had nothing to do with such myths or customs, other than that they and it point to the same universal truth: that no man can seek to obtain authority over men without being tempted to use any means that may come to hand. And further, that no kingdom or character can be permanently constructed on unrighteousness. We may add, indeed, that as the temptation of Christ was a necessary part of His preparation, so in all ages and among all peoples some test, oftentimes ceremonial, has been required of every man before he enters upon the mission of his life.

The period in the wilderness ended, our Lord returned to the scene of John's preaching. He

The Baptist's acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus.

knows now, beyond all question, what His work in life is to be, and that He is able to accomplish it. John is also fully assured that He was indeed the Messiah. To the enquiring Jews from Jerusalem, he speaks of the Man who though coming after him had been preferred before him: "there standeth one among you, whom ye know not." The next day after this testimony he saw Jesus approaching, and to those who stood by he pointed Him out as the Lamb of God, and told how he came to know Him. The title given by the Baptist to Him indicates the thought in his mind of sacrifice: He it is who taketh away the sin of the world. The ministry of Jesus was over before these words of St. John were understood. No one seems to have thought at that time of a suffering Messiah: though the prophets had spoken of such.

The discovery by others of the Messiah.

In the morning of the day following, John and Jesus saw each other for the last time. The work of the one was done; the ministry of the other, beginning. Two disciples left the Baptist and followed the Man of Nazareth: Andrew, and evidently John, a son of Zebedee. They spent the day with Jesus; and in that day they learned from Him the truth of His Messiahship. They were the first to sit at His feet; to accept His claims; to enter into His kingdom. Their conversion is shown in the announcement of Andrew to his brother Simon: "We have found the Messiah." The words imply that the search had been going on for some time, probably since the Baptist had declared His speedy coming.

Simon was the first brought to Jesus by Andrew ; and the word "first" may be taken to imply that he found others. Perhaps he or Simon told the Master where their townsman Philip could be found ; and when Jesus had found him, Philip found Nathaniel. The doubt of Nathaniel as to the possibility of any thing or any person good coming out of Nazareth passed away when he discerned the knowledge of Jesus. Conviction seems to have gone farther with him than with the other men. Philip had described Jesus as He would be commonly known, the Son of Joseph ; but Nathaniel grasped the fact which John the Baptist had discerned : "Thou art the Son of God ; thou art the King of Israel." This ardent declaration was followed by a prophecy, which must have reminded Nathaniel of the vision of Jacob at Bethel, while the title assumed by our Lord, differing from the other titles which by John and Nathaniel had been ascribed to Him, set forth His relationship to man : "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

The marriage-feast at Cana of Galilee.

Thus one by one believers were added to the Lord Jesus. Each man came and saw ; and each man apprehended, if not the whole truth, yet at least the saving part of the truth,—enough, later on, to induce him to accept the call to the Apostolate. Three days after this Jesus and His little group of followers were at Cana, the home of Nathaniel, and the home also of friends, perhaps relatives, of the Blessed

Virgin. Here a wedding feast was in progress, and Jesus found His mother there present. A ready welcome was vouchsafed Him and His disciples: the text implies that He was called now, on His return from the Baptism and Temptation, and not that He had been previously invited. The addition of six or seven unexpected guests made necessary a fresh supply of wine,—as one of the old manuscripts reads, "the wine of the marriage was consumed." Naturally the mother of Jesus would make known to Him, perhaps by way of excuse, the difficulty which His coming had occasioned. Perhaps already she had been told of the testimony of John the Baptist, while the presence of the disciples who had gathered about Him, and who doubtless were eager to make known their convictions of Him, not only led her to recall promises and evidences of His person and character, dimly and uncertainly no doubt, but also convinced her that in some way or other He would satisfy the need. And so it happened. There was no display of authority; no sign of miraculous operation. He merely bade the servants fill with water the six stone vessels standing near by for the purposes of purification; and then carry of the water to the ruler or steward of the feast. It should be observed that the water had not been put into the wine-skins, so that no dregs or traces of wine had affected it, but into jars which were used only to contain water. The change came about without observation. Only on tasting the water made wine, the ruler or steward of the feast

discovered that it was better than the wine served hitherto. We have not to do with the allegories which have been brought out of this miracle: such lie upon the surface, possibly to the hiding of the occurrence itself, so that instead of fact some find nothing but myth. Nevertheless the Evangelist declares this to be a beginning of the signs or miracles wrought by Jesus, in which He so manifested forth His power as to strengthen the disciples' faith. Whether the miracle induced others at the feast to believe in Him, we are not told; but it is not unlikely that some of the guests were among the first to make the Galilean ministry of our Lord so happy and helpful. At all events, it is significant that Jesus should give the first sign of His power in the midst of the home-life, and on an occasion such as this: thus indicating that the religion He would establish should not be out of touch with the social interests of humanity, even though they are of the earth earthy. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Whatever else may be deduced from these words, this seems clear: that asceticism, though sometimes expedient and helpful, is not necessary to the religion of Jesus Christ.

Matt. xi. 18, 39.

There was no moment in our Lord's life when it could be said that the preparation for the passion ended, and the passion itself began. In

The ending of the preparation and the beginning of

the passion; and the mingling of both.

a sense, the preparation had been going on in eternity itself, for Christ was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"; and the passion continued throughout His earthly life, —from His first consciousness of self till His declaration on the Cross, "It is finished." But the passion is more easily traced in its development from the beginning of His ministry to its culmination at Calvary; and the preparation may be considered as belonging to His childhood, youth, and early manhood, till at last the beginnings of His glory were manifested at Cana. If this limitation be taken, our study of the preparation here comes to an end. Only it must be apparent to any one who endeavours to carry out a project of this kind, that no study can possibly be complete, or, even so far as it goes, satisfactory in every particular. The material in the hand of the historian is scanty, though sufficient for the practical purposes of the Christian life, but the insurmountable difficulty lies in the incapacity of the human mind to understand the facts of our Lord's nature and character which reflection and devotion discover. These are the facts which the Church Catholic has set forth in the Nicene Creed:—

One Lord Jesus Christ:

(*a*) The only-begotten Son of God; begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made:

(β) Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven:

(γ) And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

Faith cannot go contrary to reason, but it can outstrip reason.

Such is the faith of Christendom; but the explanation of the faith, seeing that it involves things infinite, eternal, and divine, as well as things finite, temporal, and human, perplexes and frequently baffles the powers of man's mind. We may illustrate, but we cannot unfold or clear up the mysteries involved. We believe, but as yet we cannot know,—if by knowledge we mean that which comes of reason rather than that which comes of intuition. No doubt enters the mind of the believer that these things are so; but there is no present possibility of showing either why or how they are so. All the way along we are bordered by mystery: oftentimes mystery that refuses to yield to examination, and in which the venturesome are lost. Again and again reason fails: not that it discovers truths that are contrary to itself, but truths that are beyond its powers. The facts are evident enough, but the secret of the facts remains hidden. Thus it happens that much which is taken for explanation is no more than speculation. Amid the mountains of truth we wander fearfully through the valleys of research; but the research nearly always takes us from the mountains, and rarely to their heights. After a while the boldest mind learns to hesitate; and perhaps in that hesitation lies its surest hope. Rising from the fields of argument and fancy,

faith soars into the heavens, and when its flight is stayed it pours forth its song of adoration. And so when the mind can no longer advance into the mystery of Christ, the heart still lays its love at His feet, and worships Him as Lord.

Christ must ever be the One to whom His people turn their studies and devotions.

And yet the study of a subject such as this, though oftentimes and necessarily inconclusive, is not without benefit, even if it does no more than suggest that some conceptions and interpretations concerning the personality and mission of the Lord Jesus have been unjustifiably taken for granted, and wrongly regarded as final. They may have hindered rather than helped. At the same time any conception or interpretation that enables us the better to understand the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour is to be welcomed. The glory out of which He came, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation, the doctrines of foreknowledge, predestination, and the union in one person of two natures, though difficult of understanding, perhaps impossible, must be kept in mind if we would appreciate the life of One who veiled deity in flesh. We recall the incidents associated with His birth and childhood, not only because of their surpassing interest for humanity, but also because they enable us to make certain how thoroughly and completely He became man. Looking back out of the fulness of Christian experience and teaching, we perceive in these incidents that which no one at the time imagined. The course of our study has led us to certain conclusions, which we here repeat as a summary of the

whole. Our Blessed Lord developed as all children develop; and acquired knowledge according to the laws of that nature into which He had been born. There was a time when He no more thought Himself divine than His mother grasped the meaning of the Annunciation, or comprehended the miracle of the Virgin-birth. He came to know Himself to be the Son of God, as after the Resurrection she came to know Him as such. But in the days of His ministry she seems to have found in Him rather disappointment than the fulfilment of prophecy; and even set herself against His purpose. They who were related to Him by blood or acquaintance were not among the first to see in Him anything more than common. We can understand this; and we can further picture to ourselves those characteristics which have made Him so dear to humanity. And yet we shall not know the Christ of the Gospels, the Christ to whom the Church owes her life and whom she acknowledges as her King, if we do not recognize behind all this, that the Son of Mary is also the Son of God. He is prepared for the sacrifice, and the sacrifice will give Him the leadership of men and enable Him to bring the world to God. There is divinity in Him, although for a while He may not have known it; and that divine nature rested as it were within His humanity, by its presence there to consecrate, strengthen, and make perfect the Man, and to exalt the Man, not only to a Cross, but also to the throne of a kingdom which shall never pass away.

The divine in Jesus was never separated from the human.

Thus through the years of His life on earth God was ever with the Man Christ Jesus; and they who knew Him best testified of His glory: "We beheld His glory," says St. John, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Even Nicodemus could declare, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." So we affirm of Him that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost; at His baptism, "the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him,—and it abode upon Him"; St. Peter set forth to Cornelius the fact that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power"; and the text of the sermon at Nazareth which resulted in His rejection by the people of the place where He had been brought up, and which so clearly described the purpose and work of His gracious ministry, was from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

John i. 14; iii. 2.

Luke iii. 22; John i. 32.

Acts x. 38.

Luke iv. 18.

In God He lived; in God He died: inseparably one with the Father in life and in death, the life a death, and the death a life. From Bethlehem to Calvary the shadow of the Cross rested upon Him; after Calvary, the shadow changed into light, and the light increases, so that

shame has given place to glory, and He who prepared Himself for the Passion, now as Prince in the House of His Father prepares for His people a home, where sin can never come and peace eternally abides.

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